Archaeology and Indigenous Peoples

INCORPORATING NONBINARY GENDER INTO INUIT ARCHAEOLOGY

ORAL TESTIMONY AND MATERIAL INROADS

Meghan Walley

ROUTLEDGE

Incorporating Nonbinary Gender into Inuit Archaeology

Incorporating Nonbinary Gender into Inuit Archaeology: Oral Testimony and Material Inroads explores gender diversity in precontact Inuit history.

By combining evidence from interviews with re-examinations of previously excavated archaeological collections, the book challenges binary narratives and creates an allowance for diverse narratives around gender to emerge. This work approaches a wide range of ethnographic and archaeological sources with a critical eye, opening up a dialogue between queer Indigenous studies; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Two Spirit, Plus (LGBTQ2S+) Inuit; and archaeology in order to question normative colonial narratives about Indigenous pasts while providing concrete examples of how researchers can begin to let go of rigid assumptions. In this way, the reader is encouraged to explore novel perspectives and think beyond boxes to understand gender complexity in precontact Inuit culture.

This book has been written for a wide academic audience, particularly those interested in queer archaeologies, archaeologies of gender, decolonial archaeologies, and indigenous archaeologies and oral history.

Meghan Walley is an archaeologist who focuses on oral history and LGBTQ2S+ narratives of the past.

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Oral Testimony and Material Inroads

Meghan Walley

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Introduction

Creating mess in archaeological research

> Persistent disinclination to address difference in the past illustrates how archaeologists may revel in dirt but loath mess.
>
> (Geller 2009: 65)

This is a story about mess. Specifically, it is the story of the ethical, conceptual, and material messes that are inherent in the act of attempting to queer the archaeological record. It is also a story about how worthwhile mess can be.

As purveyors of the past, we tend to simplify our narratives in order for them to be digestible. We categorize everything from time periods, to lithic typologies, to site formation processes, to identity. Much of the time, these categorizations help us along in our research. Categories can give our work order and meaning. They contribute ease to our analyses, allow us to see patterns, and ease communication. Without categories, archaeologists would be stuck describing each lithic, potsherd, and bone in painstaking detail. Classificatory systems provide us with the ability to focus in on specific kinds of evidence and formulate legible models of the past without extraneous noise.

However, our propensity to categorize also limits us. While these categories can make history seem more coherent, they do not always adequately encompass the complex and dynamic nature of human pasts. If we do not question the categories we apply to the past, then we bar ourselves from fresh perspectives; we miss detail, and, worst of all, we risk naturalizing categories that are historically oppressive and perpetuate experiences of marginalization in the present.

By boiling entire cultures down to digestible systems using structural approaches, we contribute to essentialisms of so-called *traditional* cultures, which strip people of a complex and fleshly cultural identity. In anthropological and archaeological practice, this has often meant reducing Indigenous cultures to a flat set of practices that are easily attributed to survival, production, and reproduction. Concurrently, these narratives are most often told in a way that is familiar and understandable to a white settler audience. Although few social scientists today will admit to viewing Indigenous groups as *living museums* that replicate a shared human past rooted in the

simple goal of surviving long enough to reproduce, these colonial ideas still factor heavily into anthropological and archaeological research.

It is, therefore, my assertion that archaeologists must accept some degree of messiness in order to bring greater depth and ontological acuity to our research. We can (and should) use the resources at our disposal to question what we hold true and what we perceive as natural. This is of particular importance when we are penning narratives of pasts that do not rightfully belong to us, as I, a white Canadian of predominantly European descent, have here set out to do.

I have, therefore, taken on the task of creating a mess, however small, to re-conceptualize Inuit gender as it might have stood prior to the imposition of white settler values. The central goal of this thesis is to explore the archaeological possibility of gender complexity in precontact Inuit culture by introducing mess, in various forms, into current archaeological narratives.

Expressions of precontact Inuit gender have been discussed widely in the archaeological literature (Crass 1998, 2000, 2001; Hodgetts 2013; Hennebury 1999; Reinhardt 2002; Scheitlin 1980; Whitridge 1999). While some of these studies account for gender complexity, others have grown largely from Christian white settler values, which break gender into the binary categories of men and women and assume that there was a complementarity of these categories based on strictly heterosexual pair-bonding. Archaeologists have used diagnostic tools to identify these categories of gender, often mapping gendered spaces onto precontact sites by identifying clusters of tools that have been thought to neatly represent men and women, respectively.

However, recent anthropological literature and oral testimony suggests that Inuit gender is traditionally fluid and does not fit neatly into a binary framework (Birkett-Smith 1953: 94; Crass 1998, 2000, 2001; Robert-Lamblin 1981; Rydström 2010; Saladin d'Anglure 1994, 2005, 2006; Saunders 2017; Stewart 2002). While complimentary gender roles did exist, the extent to which they are based on biologically sexed bodies remains unclear. Furthermore, mediatory spaces between these roles allowed people to transgress gender categories, swap roles, and assume a mixture of responsibilities within their communities. By taking static binary gender categories as a given, archaeologists have eliminated nuance from the past, perpetuating the notion that neither gender nor sexual complexity factored into Inuit culture before the time of European contact (Gregoire 2014), which has had a negative impact on LGBTQ2S+-identifying Inuit living today.

This thesis has two main objectives: 1) to explore the contemporary importance of more complex investigations of sexual and gender diversity from within Inuit LGBTQ2S + communities and 2) to begin to introduce an understanding of gender complexity into archaeological discourse surrounding precontact Inuit culture. In order to achieve the former objective, I spoke with LGBTQ2S+-identifying Inuit to learn about their connection to a queer past and assess the impacts that queer historical and archaeological research can have on legitimizing the identities of people living today. These interviews form the basis of this research in that they articulate a need for

an expansion of Inuit archaeology to include gender and sexual diversity. Contributions of participants will be included throughout this thesis, but Chapter 6 will focus specifically on these interviews. Common themes they discussed were the desire to know about their queer ancestors and the potential for queer research to aid in feelings of mental well-being and suicide prevention.

While the interview component of this research centred on the necessity of acknowledging gender and sexual complexity in the Inuit past, the second component articulated the possibility of expanding research on a material level. To address this latter objective, I examined precontact archaeological collections with attention to materiality, functional categorization, and decorative motifs that make reference to embodiment and mythology in Inuit culture. In doing so, I was attempting to situate them in a more complex gender system that allowed for mixing, amalgamation, and fluidity of gender identities that cannot be confined within a binary classificatory framework. The main outcome of my analysis, however, has been its exposure of the many assumptions that make it into current archaeological discourse on gender and sexuality. It has never been my goal to explain precontact Inuit gender expression in a new but equally static way, since "Inuit culture" has never been homogenous, but rather to lay the groundwork for archaeologists to approach gender in ways that are more culturally and regionally nuanced and to advocate for research that is based in Inuit needs, desires, and perspectives.

Uncritically accepting our own normative categories as natural and constant allows us to perpetuate stereotyped notions of the past. However, if we begin to dismantle these categories and stereotypes of Indigeneity, we might find ways to move forward with research that is of use to contemporary Indigenous communities. We must deploy complex understandings of the past that rest upon the incorporation of Indigenous voices and agencies to create decolonial archaeologies that are useful to descendant communities (see Gadoua 2014, for example). In turn, this work can help give people a sense of place in relation to their ancestors by engaging with narratives of the past that transcend structural (colonial) essentialisms. In setting out to dismantle normative categories in favour of more accurate and nuanced research, I have often asked myself how is it that, in museums with vast facilities for cultural materials, both ethnographic and archaeological, and in university departments wholly devoted to understanding how past people lived, thought, and acted, queerness is rarely afforded even mere closet space?

By contributing to the growing body of work surrounding nonbinary gender and gender complexity in archaeology, I hope to carve out new spaces for individuals whose identities have gone unrecognized in scholarship and provide new ways for us to understand the complexity of gender systems through time and space.[1] In addition, I hope to contribute to narratives of the past that decolonize by acknowledging complexity. As Michel-Rolph Trouillot has stated, power, in this case neocolonial hegemony, is reinforced when "'facts'

become clear, sanitized" (1995: 116). It follows that we may subvert that power by de-sanitizing and making a mess again of our historical narratives.

In Chapter 1, I provide background on the archaeology of gender and of the approaches archaeologists and anthropologists have taken to Inuit gender in the past. Chapter 2 presents the evidence that precontact Inuit had concepts of nonbinary gender, including a review of anthropological literature, oral history, and Inuit mythology. Here I also explore the diversity of these narratives by exploring examples from regionally distinct Inuit cultures.

In Chapter 3, I discuss queer theory, providing a brief background on the history of its emergence within the sphere of LGBTQ politics and its relationship with third wave feminism, as well as its subsequent growth into a distinct body of theory that is applicable well beyond the sphere of activism and identity politics. Building from that, Chapter 4 explores the emergent body of queer Indigenous theory. Here I advocate for its incorporation into Indigenous archaeology projects, highlighting the discursive power of queer theory within the realm of decolonial archaeology, both through the exploration of the queer subject (LGBTQ2S+ studies) and queer theory as subjectless critique (queer theory applied to dismantling normative categories and naturalization narratives).

In Chapter 5, I discuss the use of oral history and oral testimony as a means to democratize research by inviting people with historically marginalized identities to speak for themselves. In this chapter, I outline my methodology for conducting oral testimony interviews with LGBTQ2S+-identifying Inuit. In Chapter 6, I present the results of these interviews, highlighting prominent themes that ran through the interviews, such as relationships with Christianity, decolonization, community cohesion, and suicide prevention.

In Chapters 7 and 8, I move on to the more "archaeological" aspects of this work in that I focus on materiality. Chapter 7 outlines the basis for material exploration of gender complexity in the Inuit past, presenting issues inherent in the ways we currently interpret "gendered" objects and proposing new directions for understanding the material record. In Chapter 8, I outline my methodology for re-examining material culture while holding space for the possibility of gender and sexual complexity and summarize my findings within precontact Inuit collections housed at the Canadian Museum of History. Here I discuss material expressions of nonbinary gender and gender complexity as they occur in the archaeological record, focusing on the construction of bodies and personhood, hybridity of gendered elements in precontact artifacts and artifacts as agents of gender mediation. While this chapter provides the material grounding for this work and might, therefore, be the aspect that archaeologists are most drawn to, it would be a mistake to consider it this work's core. While I do present several problems with the way we study gender in the Inuit past and provide examples of ways to move forward with complex and culturally pertinent gender research in archaeology, I do not answer archaeologists' longings for a simple answer by providing a fixed framework for an inclusive Inuit archaeology of gender.

Instead, I present results that undermine the notion of fixed categories of gender and, ultimately, pose more questions than they answer.

In Chapter 9, the final chapter of this work, I tie together oral history and archaeological approaches through a focus on complicating (or making a mess of) research and presenting more democratic narratives of the past, which can explore marginalized identities with more ease than dominant historical narratives of Inuit gender and sexuality. Future approaches should be determined on a case-by-case basis and should be situated in as specific a regional history as possible. Central to this work, then, is the idea that additional investigations must be undertaken.

In these pages, I hope to provoke change in archaeological research by complicating our narratives of the past. While it would be nice to be able to provide a neat and tidy interpretation of archaeological materials that highlight gender complexity in a way that is both simple and clear-cut, to find diagnostic artifacts for complex or nonbinary gender is not the goal of this book, nor should it be. When we seek to distil everything to its simplest possible form, we project our own norms onto the past; we miss detail, and omit humanity from the work we do. Although I admittedly entered this process armed with anthropological literature propounding "third gender", naively prepared to *find it* in archaeological materials, I have discovered that this approach is as clunky and fruitless as trying to *find* binary genders. As a result, instead of constructing a neat model of a multiple-gender system, I have opted to make a mess. In doing so, I hope to provide alternatives to the ways we interpret gender and to expand the limitations we have thus far placed on our understandings of human pasts.

Note

1 Here I want to be clear that I do not seek to create a queer rights movement for Inuit, since such movements already exist (discussed in Chapter 6) and are led by Inuit who have a much better handle on their lived experiences and their needs than someone like me ever could. Instead, I intend to utilize my knowledge, skills, and access to archaeological materials to contribute to alternative narratives of the past that can then be taken up by LGBTQ2+ Inuit and expanded upon if desired.

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1 Inuit gender

Archaeological and anthropological approaches

In our current political and cultural climate, discussions of gender and identity are playing a prominent role. Within the past decade or so, North America's zeitgeist has become ripe with conversations about gender—from its social impacts, to the way we build our legal systems, to the ways we understand and define it, to its mutability, to the celebration of the diversity it entails, to the challenges of dismantling the oppressive norms that surround it. In recent years, we have seen a revitalization of feminism in what some would call its fourth-wave iteration—a feminism characterized by its uptake of the third wave's intersectional approaches that is playing out in a new, virtual arena. Concurrently, trans visibility has reached new heights through the Internet, which has been a tool for building connections and solidarity, shedding light on anti-trans violence and marginalization, and exposing a greater number of people to trans history and politics. The Internet has also allowed more violent perspectives to flourish and for sometimes overwhelming pushback against marginalized groups and identities.

What strikes me about many of these conversations is that while they are situated in a contemporary context, they have largely emerged from historical circumstances and draw heavily from understandings of the past that have, at times, been informed by archaeological narratives. As these narratives seep into a broader collective imagining of the way things were and have been, they often inform viewpoints on how things *ought* to be. After all, where would the contemporary men's rights activist be without ideas propounded in *Man the Hunter* (Lee and DeVore 1968) or without C. Owen Lovejoy's (1988) argument that the success of early hominins rested upon the monogamous pair-bonding of a strong provisioning male with a passive, immobile female who needed to save her protein for lactation?

All of this is to say that, in a world that is busy renegotiating gender, archaeologists have a crucial role to play, largely due to the fact that our work is often used to form naturalization narratives that inform the way people understand contemporary social and political circumstances, roles, and identities.[1] However, archaeologists' focus on gender has a relatively short history, with a serious focus on gender roles emerging in the 1950s. Today, gender is narrowly discussed in binary terms and any challenge or

subversion to this paradigm is viewed as niche. This tendency—even among those archaeologists who take no issue with the concept that multiple diverse genders have existed throughout human history but, nonetheless, see research that openly acknowledges them as a quirky subgenre of the already somewhat marginalized study of gender in archaeology—reflects a culture that has yet to grapple fully with gender and take it seriously in all its iterations and nuances. Indeed, in embarking on this research, I was faced with a major stumbling block: there is such a profound dearth of literature in archaeology that engages with nonbinary gender that finding a jumping-off point posed a considerable challenge.

Perhaps more dire than the state of gender research in archaeology is the study of sexuality. One of the major shortcomings of archaeology as a discipline is the way we are so often limited by our personal sensitivities. Despite the fact that we claim to be digging into the breadth of past human experience, we ignore one of the things that is central to human existence and well-being: our intimate relationships. This can largely be boiled down to the fact that we are too embarrassed to talk about sex, particularly in professional spaces. As a result, the attention archaeologists give to sex and sexuality is miniscule in proportion to the role they play in human lives across all spatial, temporal, and cultural barriers. While this research engages primary with expressions of gender in the material record, multiple interview participants raised points that articulated a need for serious explorations of sexuality in the realm of archaeological research. It seems that mainstream archaeologists have trailed behind other social sciences when it comes to things like gender and sexuality, despite archaeology's potential to expand definitions, dismantle stereotypes, and create space for acceptance of diversity in the present.

There is a significant precedent for archaeological research on expressions of precontact Inuit gender. Many studies seek to understand precontact Inuit gender identity and social relationships between gendered people. However, as with the archaeology of gender in general, few have given any serious consideration to gender and sexual diversity. This is not because the evidence of gender diversity in Inuit culture is lacking—anthropological literature about nonbinary gender and oral testimony attesting to the fluid nature of Inuit gender exists but has not been adequately incorporated into these approaches. This oversight is due to a variety of factors, including colonization and Christianization, which led to the demise of overt Inuit religious practice and forms and expressions of identity that were not in keeping with a white settler value system, the perpetuation and naturalization of these values by white European ethnographers, and the perceived difficulty of reading complex gender ideologies through the assessment of archaeological materials.

While this research is situated within a specific cultural past and addresses a culturally specific present, it is useful to explore how it is that we have arrived at this point in archaeological discourse more broadly. As such, this

chapter first provides a broad background for the research presented in this book by coarsely recounting the history of gender studies in archaeological research and then shifts its focus to gender in Inuit archaeology, specifically. In examining these histories—not the histories of genders themselves but the histories of how those genders have been studied and inscribed into a collective understanding of what is *normal* and *natural* in the scope of human behaviour—we can begin to pick apart some of the assumptions that have been made, upon which further interpretations have rested and set the stage for new explorations of gender and sexuality in the human past.

Gender and sex

Before entering a discussion that will largely surround expressions of gender and incorporate notions of sex, it is important that I briefly explain what I mean by these terms. A notion has long been held, both in the social sciences and in popular discourse, that sex is to nature what gender is to culture, meaning that sex is natural, pre-discursive, and concrete, while gender is cultural, social, and subject to change. This view has been deemed problematic for a variety of reasons. In 1975, Gayle Rubin described what she termed the "sex/gender" system as the system wherein gender is produced in relation to biological sex and sexuality (771). Through this concept, Rubin established an interrelationship between sex, gender, and sexuality, while maintaining their separateness.

Beginning in the early '90s, gender and queer theorists propounded the culturally constructed nature of both gender and sex, claiming that they result from culturally specific body practices and the everyday performance of gender roles and that they can change over time. Judith Butler (1990, 1993) challenges the popular notion that sex is to biology as gender is to culture, arguing instead that both sex and gender are culturally constructed. She also acknowledges that there is an interrelationship between biologically sexed bodies and gender, claiming that sexed bodies are unable to signify without a relationship with gender. That is not to say that gender and sex always exist in a one-to-one causal relationship but rather that they are both constructed categories, that they are constructed within their own cultural circumstances (and that they carry with them experiences of oppression, which are intertwined with other categories, such as race, class, and ethnicity within cultures), and that they are constituted by and understood in terms of their relationships with one another.

In this book, I generally use gender to refer to a variety of social roles, ways of being, and modes of dress that are distinct to certain people in society, while incorporating the notion that these are fluid and ever-shifting, both on an individual and a cultural level. Although I adhere to the notion that sex is also constructed (see discussion of figurines in Chapter 7), I do use the western concept of biological sex to denote bodily features and physicality in order to articulate conversations between enacted gender and physical

bodies. In this sense, I am borrowing from scholars such as Will Roscoe (1998: 127), who described sex as "a category of bodies, and gender as a category of persons", which does not preclude the constructedness of either and creates a distinction between the two while still allowing for an interrelationship between them. However, I make an effort to keep the constructedness of sex near the surface of these conversations, acknowledging different understandings of bodies through this work and embracing notions of fluid sex as they turn up in Inuit literature and oral tradition.

The history of gender research in archaeology

There is a long history of gender-based research in archaeology, the central focuses of which have changed over time based largely on the cultural and political circumstances of the archaeologists themselves. From their inception, archaeologies that sought to examine gender were plagued with a tendency to project the cultural norms of the archaeologist onto the past, creating naturalization narratives that legitimized and reinforced contemporary norms and masked variation and cultural specificity in the past. Examining the broad trends in gender research in archaeology provides a window into the way archaeologists were thinking through cultural norms and the changes that they might have been undergoing. Under these shifting circumstances, several broad trends of gender research in archaeology emerged. Here I provide a brief summary of this trajectory.

Although serious archaeological conversations about gender did not begin to take place until the mid-twentieth century, some of the earliest conversations about human evolution drew upon historically contingent understandings of gender to formulate a rough shape for the human past. Among the most prominent is Charles Darwin's *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871), wherein Darwin sets out the concept of sexual selection. Notably, many of his arguments present Victorian values surrounding gender, sexuality, and social norms as a reflection of concrete biological realities. Of course, it is confirmation bias and not a privileged understanding of *biological reality* that caused Darwin—and continues to cause us—to understand our beliefs and social norms as a product of nature in its pure form. We see similar patterns of naturalization in archaeological literature surrounding gender.

The first major trend in archaeological research that explicitly addressed gender—often referred to as the Man the Hunter model—emerged in the 1950s and '60s. The central tendency in this research was to explore the importance of men and male hunting behaviour in the formation of human behaviour. These models focused mainly on hunter-gatherer social structures and positioned male hunting practices as the major influence on social, cultural, and biological progress. Bartholomew and Birdsell (1953) were among the early proponents of these framings of human evolution, attributing the evolutionary trajectory of humanity to strictly divided gender roles

and nuclear family structures. In 1968, a symposium called *Man the Hunter* (Lee and DeVore 1968) brought together papers that centred male hunting activity as a factor for human success, solidifying this view. This body of work all but omitted women.

In the 1970s, emerging from second-wave feminist discourse, Woman the Gatherer models began to take shape. These models (Dahlberg 1983; Friedl 1975; Slocum 1975; Zihlman 1978) highlighted women's roles in hunter-gatherer society, roles that proponents argued had been unjustly ignored and downplayed. Woman the Gatherer models forefronted the roles women had in food production (as "gatherers"), which asserted and naturalized the socio-economic importance of women. Although this trend in archaeological literature broadened gender research beyond its former androcentrism, it re-entrenched notions of static, bounded, and universal categories of gender.

In the 1980s, archaeologists began to recognize the need for more nuanced and culturally specific studies of gender. For example, Conkey and Spector (1984) argued that archaeological interpretations are frequently based uncritically on present norms that might not apply to the cultures we study, describing gender categories as cultural constructs that are administered haphazardly to archaeological data and stating that archaeology is used to substantiate a *gender mythology*, which naturalizes western gender categories.

These observations touch on a broader conversation about the ways in which our framings of the past influence our norms in the present and, in turn, how our present norms are used to construct ideas about the past. Roberta Gilchrist similarly states, "Gender may be understood as the cultural interpretation of sexual difference: its qualities can be conflicting, mutable, and cumulative, contingent upon personal and historical circumstances" (1999: 1).

Frink et al. (2002) describe gender as a set of relationships, or as positionalities constructed through interactions between multiple complex agents, instead of a flat, static dichotomy (Frink et al. 2002: 3). The authors point out that our interpretations of gender in the past tend to be grounded in simplified notions of the way we do things and that despite abundant literature surrounding gender in Indigenous North America, few anthropologists have analytically addressed gender on Indigenous terms. The authors argue that understandings of gender should take into account the variability of human cultures, the cultural production and reproduction of identities, and the interrelationships that comprise gender (ibid.).

Oversimplification has outcomes similar to what Susan Kent (1998: 18) has described as a "timeless effect", which paints gender as fixed and ignores the dynamism of roles, powers, and relationships through time and space, resulting from the projection of contemporary gender norms and constructs onto the past.

Working from outside of an archaeological context, but making points that articulate with the emergent archaeological discourse of the time, Donna Haraway (1984) points to the ways that museum displays (in this

case, natural history museum displays) have the power both to reflect and reinforce patriarchal norms. Here she engages critically with naturalization narratives that assert oppressive power structures through the implementation of specific types of images. Discussing dioramas composed of taxidermy animals, she observes,

> Most groups are made up of only a few animals, usually including a large and vigilant male, a female or two, and one baby. . . . Each group forms a community structured by natural division of function; the whole animal in the whole group is nature's truth. The physiological division of labour that has informed the history of biology is embodied in these habitat groups which tell of communities and families, peacefully and hierarchically ordered.
>
> (24)

In this context, museum displays are conveying and reinforcing a hierarchical power structure. Through the display of the past, as with the display of "nature" in Haraway's context, whether in museums, publications, field reports, community engagement initiatives, or university classrooms, archaeologists have the power to differentially enforce or subvert these structures. In general, if we do not explicitly question our own culturally specific understandings of social dynamics, human behaviour, and gender roles, we tend to bring them into our work, projecting them into contexts where they did not, in reality, exist. Further, in our engagement with the past, as Haraway noted about the museum's engagement with nature, we spread these messages and reiterate our values for broader publics.

In addition to conversations surrounding the naturalization of gender norms, there has been an increased focus in recent years on sexuality (Schmidt and Voss 2000; Voss 2000b, 2005), which has generally been stigmatized in academic settings and evaded archaeological study. This literature covers past sexual practice and attitudes (Gilchrist 2000; Koloski-Ostrow and Lyons 1997; Voss 2005, 2000a; Weismantel 2004); sexualities that are considered non-normative, such as homosexuality (Casella 2000; Dowson 2000a, 2000b; Rubin 2000); and archaeologies of sex work (Seifert et al. 2000). Other archaeologists have begun to focus on nonbinary gender expression (Hollimon 1997, 2000, 2001, 2006; Senior 2000), which will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 2 in terms of the use of queer theory in archaeological research.

Current discourse surrounding gender has resulted in multiple anthropological and archaeological investigations of different cultures' gender systems, demonstrating that the biological attribution of sex, and the subsequent conflation of sex and gender has actually held back interpretations of materials from the past. However, archaeologists have not quite shaken the tendency to rely on reductive notions of sex and gender as the basis for our interpretations.

While gender has long played into archaeological research, approaches tend to be fraught with subjectivity. The projection of one's own gender norms onto the past is a common pitfall, one which has prevented archaeologists from rigorously examining the gender systems as they existed within the cultures we study. I am not exempt from this process but hope to open up discussion by using my work to present alternative narratives.

Precontact Inuit archaeology of gender

This book focuses on precontact Inuit culture, often referred to as "Thule" culture,[2] the ancestors of modern Inuit (McGhee 1972, 1996: 22; Whitridge 1999: 61). This culture, first recorded archaeologically by Therkel Mathiassen (1927), spread west to east beginning in North Alaska at around 1000 BP (Mathiassen 1927; Morrison 1989; Whitridge 1999). Inuit then migrated into the Central and High Arctic beginning around 800 BP (McCullough 1993; Morrison 1989; Whitridge 1999). They began to leave parts of the Canadian Arctic Archipelago in favour of Low Arctic regions between 600 and 500 BP, spreading to Quebec (Maxwell 1985), Labrador (Kaplan 1980; Fitzhugh 1994), and southern Greenland (Jordan 1979). Precontact Inuit hunted sea mammals, including bowhead whales, occupied semi-subterranean houses of wood or whale bone construction (McGhee 1996: 22–23), and had rich material culture.

Abundant archaeological research on precontact Inuit has been conducted in recent years. This research is grounded in the notion that Inuit communities were almost wholly comprised by two sets of social actors: men and women. Gender roles were complimentary and mutually beneficial, with men doing most of the hunting and women generally sticking closer to base camps, processing skins, making clothing, cooking, collecting eggs, hunting birds and small game, and fishing (Balikci 1970: 61–63; Briggs 1974; Guemple 1986, 1995; Hodgetts 2013: 67; McGhee 1977). These studies of precontact Inuit gender vary in their rigidity; some archaeologists tend to see gender as relatively simplistic and bounded, applying a strict binary framework to their interpretations, while others recognize some degree of fluidity between gender roles.

In one approach to gender, Lisa Hodgetts (2013) discusses gendered understandings of landscape among precontact Inuit, tackling the differing perspectives that Inuit men and women would have had of the worlds they inhabited. Hodgetts's interpretations rest largely on the gendered division of labour that saw men go out on the land to hunt and women stay in and around the household. Notably, however, Hodgetts points out that gender roles were by no means rigid, instead providing the underlying structure to a system that was fluid in practice (61).

Among the more rigid examples, Christine Hennebury (1999) investigates Eastern precontact Inuit (referred to as *Thule*) houses in order to examine gendered spaces within the household. She uses k-means cluster analysis to

identify clusters of artifacts that act as proxies for men and women, respectively. Hennebury's results were negative, showing no distinctive gendered spaces. From this, she concludes that gendered spaces were difficult to discern because gender roles were cooperative rather than competitive. Hennebury holds that this type of analysis is useful, maintaining that examinations of gender in the archaeological record can rest on the distribution of artifacts with gender attributions. Thomas Scheitlin (1980) conducts a similar spatial analysis of precontact Inuit households, again using artifacts as proxies for gendered activity areas. He finds that there are significant overlaps between clusters of gendered tools, concluding that workspace was, therefore, shared. Similarly, Peter Whitridge (1999) employs artifact correspondence analysis to examine gendered spatial patterning within households at the precontact winter site of Qariaraqyuk (one of the collections used for this research). In addition, he examines social difference between households, demonstrating variability in status within gender categories. While my own investigation of ethnographic sources and conversations with Inuit surrounding the fluidity of gender roles (discussed throughout this chapter) has led me to take Whitridge's assertion that "gendered division of labor was not only rigidly drawn for many categories of daily activity . . . but highly differentiated with respect to the material culture" (280) with a grain of salt;[3] he does present a more nuanced understanding of gender dynamics within these contexts. By intersecting gender and status, he is able to present a three-dimensional narrative of social difference at the site without unduly downplaying gender within social dynamics.

Some archaeologists have begun to question the appropriateness of using proxy approaches to gender in Inuit contexts. Barbara Crass (1998) compiled mortuary data from across the Arctic comprising over 2,000 pre-Christian Inuit burials. Her objective was to examine associations between gendered artifacts and sexed bodies, but she found that correlations here were loose, concluding that this constitutes evidence for gender fluidity. While I do take some issue with her analysis, and I do not think it conclusively points to gender fluidity due to a variety of other factors that were left somewhat unaccounted for, this study does provide a strong argument against using artifacts as direct proxies for gender.

Working from a household context, Gregory Reinhardt (2002) re-examines the gendered spaces previously interpreted by Newell (1984) of a collapsed precontact house in Alaska. At the time of the collapse, the house was occupied, producing a "Pompeii effect". Through his analysis, Reinhardt found that the concept of "gendered sides" of a house was flawed in that it tended to under-represent women in the household and did not make sense with respect to the physical spatial dynamics of movement within households. He argues that Newell's interpretation, which divided the house into gendered sides based on the spatial patterning of gendered artifacts, was not adequately sophisticated and that the artifact assemblage reduced the visibility of women, despite the presence of two female bodies in the house

at the time of the collapse (127). Reinhardt asserts that there is a need for archaeologists to consider "what we mean by sex-based ascriptions and . . . whether those ascriptions have any emic validity" (148) and concludes by observing that artifacts that are generally associated with men's activities do not always imply the presence of males and that these artifacts were likely also used by women (148).

Conclusion

Through this research, multiple issues with using artifacts as proxies for binary genders in precontact Inuit contexts have become apparent. The first such flaw is that artifacts cannot always reliably be attributed to members of one gender. People used each other's tools and knew how to carry out a variety of tasks when necessary. The other flaw is the presence of multiple iterations of nonbinary genders in Inuit cultures. Ethnographic evidence, oral histories, and Inuit mythology suggest that the Inuit gender system is also complex. Extensive work on Inuit "third gender" (a term that I challenge in Chapter 3) comes from the French Canadian anthropologist Bernard Saladin d'Anglure (1994, 2005, 2006), who has focused most of his work on Canadian Inuit social categories and *angakkurniq* (shamanism). A more in-depth discussion presenting flaws in the proxy approach will be laid out in Chapter 2.

As demonstrated in this chapter, our understandings of gender, sexuality, and identity more broadly are highly contingent on our present social circumstances. Further, archaeology has tremendous power to influence—whether intentionally or inadvertently—our understandings of what is normal, natural, and right. As such, we must be mindful of our own understandings of what is normal, natural, or right. Forging into the future, we should consider ways to challenge dominant and often oppressive narratives that have too often been naturalized by archaeologies based in assumptions about what is normal. These include both colonial narratives and practices that in many ways have formed a basis for and run through archaeology and narratives that erase sexual and gender diversity (or what we might refer to as LGBTQ2S+ narratives) from the past. At the same time, we need to exercise caution. As discussed in later chapters, it can become dangerous to present cross-cultural narratives as evidence for a natural way of being human, even if those narratives seem progressive and inclusive. Instead, we must sit with the discomfort of knowing that many of our narratives of the past will inevitably be filtered through the lens of what we believe—and what we believe is *right*—in the present.

Notes

1 However, I would like to caution against the tendency of settler archaeologists, historians, and laypeople to use Indigenous gender expression, identity, and history solely as a means by which to legitimize settler gender diversity.

2 I have chosen to use the term "precontact Inuit" since the word "Thule" was applied to precontact Inuit by the European Archaeologist on the Fifth Thule Expedition, Therkel Mathiassen (Mathiassen 1927). In turn, this word came from Peter Freuchen and Knud Rasmussen's naming of a Greenlandic trading post "Ultima Thule" as a reference to a far north island in classical geography, a bit of white European romanticism that was similarly adopted by members of the Nazi party (Whitridge 2016: 821–822). Furthermore, the term "Thule" implies cultural discontinuity, thereby disconnecting Inuit descendant communities from their ancestors (Whitridge 2016). Although the term "precontact" is problematic in that it centres contact with Europeans as a defining feature of Inuit culture, I have found it to be the most useful descriptive term for the purposes of this thesis, particularly due to my focus on colonialism as a driving force for changes in values surrounding gender and sexuality.
3 Sorry, Pete.

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2 The evidence for nonbinary genders in Inuit cultures

In the previous chapter, I outlined a broad history of the approaches that archaeologists have taken to explore Inuit gender in the past. In this chapter, I provide a critique of these approaches by introducing Inuit-specific concepts of nonbinary gender and gender fluidity, drawing from oral testimony, anthropology, and mythology. This is not intended to provide an in-depth overview of all of the gender variations that have emerged across Inuit culture. To undertake that project would necessitate far more intensive anthropological research and multiple volumes since this is subject matter that is woefully underrepresented in academic literature. As mentioned, only one anthropologist—Bernard Saladin d'Anglure—has given any assiduous attention to the notion of a multiple-gender system in Inuit culture. While his work has been groundbreaking, research of this nature emanating from a single source, particularly when that source is a cisgender settler white man, is not adequate to formulate a holistic understanding of the subject matter at hand. Furthermore, the majority of his work has been confined to Iglulik, Nunavut. While this has taken place over a number of years and Saladin d'Anglure has formed strong connections with the community there, work so geographically limited in scope cannot be said to be at all representative of the entire range Inuit gender diversity.

Here I wish to be cautious, since I do not want to present myself as being more qualified to speak on the subject than someone who has spent a lengthy career immersed in Inuit culture. On the contrary, I want to point out the fact that I am also a white settler person and that while I am myself part of the LGBTQ2S+ community, I embody a distinctly settler mode of queerness. This means that I am writing as an outsider, and that fact should not be overlooked. What I do wish to say is that there is enormous space to explore the topics of Inuit sexual and gender diversity from an anthropological perspective and that this work would most appropriately be undertaken by Inuit who understand the intricacies of their culture on a level that Qallunaat cannot.

Why, then, am I writing this chapter or even this book? It is my belief that there are things that settler archaeologists can and cannot do, and the choice

to undertake archaeological research means that we must take our actions and our positionality into account. As I and several informants argue in this book, particularly in Chapter 6, which covers the interview portion of my research, presenting pasts that include gender and sexual diversity can be important for LGBTQ2S+ people operating from within communities and cultures that have felt the traumatic impacts of colonialism. In this sense, archaeologists have an opportunity to help dismantle narratives that uphold colonialism. However, we must always bear in mind that what we bring to the table is a toolkit—the ability to use particular lines of evidence to reconstruct human pasts—and not authority over cultures that do not belong to us. Progressive settler archaeologists are not and should never be regarded as saviours because Indigenous communities worldwide have always led that charge for themselves. What we can do is offer help in providing evidence where evidence is needed. Beyond this, we can more strongly advocate that descendant communities be regarded as experts on their own cultures and histories and do better to make Indigenous archaeologists comfortable in academic spaces and to make those spaces accessible.

In this chapter, I work with the tools available to me, presenting a breadth of evidence that precontact Inuit had concepts of nonbinary gender and gender fluidity. As is the case with the rest of this volume, I stress that I do not wish to or claim to present a narrative of *how things were*. Instead, I point to evidence that gender is vastly more complicated than the narratives that have informed the archaeological literature thus far, and that we cannot carry on imposing a static binary model of gender (nor of sexuality) onto Inuit pasts. I do not seek to come up with a model or set of models for how gender was experienced or embodied, as I do not see it as my place to do so. Instead, I make the case that we need to move away from ideas that preclude the possibility that gender and sexual diversity existed in the past.

Here I explore inroads into understanding and accepting diversity by including reviews of anthropological literature, oral history, and Inuit mythology, highlighting the ways that these different lines of evidence complicate settler narratives of gender. I also explore the diversity of these narratives by providing examples from a breadth of geographic regions, where possible, in order to make the point that there is no singular Inuit culture, and any monolithic understanding of gender or sexuality is inherently flawed.

As previously stated, there is extensive evidence for Inuit nonbinary gender and gender fluidity as well. Saladin d'Anglure describes Inuit nonbinary gender as a "third element which straddled the boundary between the two others and filled a mediatory function between them" (2005: 134), implicating nonbinary gender in a binary system dominated by men and women. However, looking at anthropological literature, published oral testimony, and interviews I conducted with Inuit community members, it would appear that Inuit nonbinary gender takes on many complex forms and cannot be defined as a single *third* gender. Examples of these include children who are said to have transformed sexually at birth, people who are raised into certain

gender roles out of economic necessity (for example, someone assigned male at birth raised in a woman's social role due to a lack of women and girls in the family), and shamans, known as *angakkuit* (*angakuq* being the singular). It is important to recognize that gender occurs along a constructed continuum or as a system rather than as two distinct sets of social roles. While the categories of "woman" and "man" were certainly culturally salient, this is only part of the story.

Saladin d'Anglure (1994) notes that *role-swapping*, wherein children take on gender roles that generally apply to another sex than that which they were assigned at birth—or roles that many settlers would read as "opposite" to their biological bodies—in order to balance an uneven sex ratio within a family or community, is common practice in Siberia, Alaska, Nunavut, and Nunavik. In Greenland, there are Inuit words for individuals who assume these gender roles: *arnaasaq* translating roughly to "womanly man", and *angutaasaq*, which translates to "manly woman" (Rydström 2010).

At the same time, the biological and bodily processes of individuals who have swapped roles are sometimes taken into account. Saladin d'Anglure (2005: 138) points to a ritual that was practiced by Inuit from Iglulik, Nunavut, wherein individuals who menstruate for the first time while identifying female made rounds through their communities with a skin pouch, and that people would pour water into a small skin pouch they carried, saying, "Well done, you have a son", articulating an association between menstruation and reproduction. On the other hand, if the menstruating individual identified as a boy, dresses in clothing denoting a masculine role, or fills the social space generally ascribed to boys, they are told, "Well done, you have cut up your first whale".

This demonstrates the flexibility of gendered concepts in relation to biological function, complicating the gendered relationships of individuals to their bodies and attesting to the idea that sex, not only gender, is constructed in varying ways across different cultures and regions. In this case, menstruation acquires multiple connotations based on the identity or social role of the individual. While white settler values have historically dictated that gender is based directly on concrete biological *realities* of sexed bodies, this example undermines this kind of naturalization narrative. Instead, in this example, understandings of biological function are determined by the gender or set of social roles that any given individual takes on.

Among the Arvilingjuarmiut (also known as the Netsilik), some children are raised as girls until they come of age, usually between the ages of 14 and 16, when they kill a certain animal and become men (Stewart 2002: 14). These children are referred to as *kipijuituq* (ibid.). Usually, the child's grandparents are the ones to decide whether they should be raised this way, often based on the infant's reactions to certain words (ibid.). Joelle Robert-Lamblin (1981) has also written about *kipijuituq*, arguing that this phenomenon occurred to even gender ratios, but Stewart (2002: 19) states that he has never encountered evidence to support this assertion.

Stewart cites an example of a *kipijuituq* child he met in 1989 whom he at first did not realize was *kipijuituq*. When he asked the child why they did not tell him, the child said that they were embarrassed, because being raised *kipijuituq* at that time had become uncommon, and because they had to use the girl's bathroom at school (Stewart 2002: 15). There are two important takeaways here. The first is that anthropologists cannot ascertain the complexities of identity based on face-value assessments, which raises the question of how many southern anthropologists, missionaries, and traders encountered cases of gender complexity and diversity without realizing it. This suggests that gender complexity is probably underrepresented in anthropological literature surrounding Inuit culture.

The second point is that as white settler mores have become increasingly common in the north social categories, such as *kipijuituq*, have largely faded. The example of a *kipijuituq* child attending a public school whose bathrooms force them to choose a single bounded gender category is a poignant illustration of the tensions between traditional forms of gender complexity and settler structures and institutions. The shame the child feels about having to act in ways that are at odds with settler structures demonstrates one way in which gender complexity has been marginalized within Indigenous cultures.

Similar to the examples cited earlier, among Greenland Inuit, people who might have otherwise been assigned male at birth based on physical characteristics were sometimes raised as girls (*nuliakkaalia*), and people who might have otherwise been assigned female at birth are raised as boys (*tikkaalia*). This was generally done when parents wanted a child of a certain gender to even out gender ratios within a household or, occasionally, to replace a prematurely deceased older sibling (Holm 1914: 67; Robert-Lamblin 1981; Stewart 2002: 19).

Among some Inuit groups, gender complexity is expressed through *sipiniit*, people who changed their sex during the process of being born. Rachel Uyarasuk (Tungilik and Uyarasuk 1999: 36) notes that long and difficult births often occurred because the child was *sipiniit*, stating that "by the time the baby was born as a little girl, you could tell it had been a little boy". Uyarasuk states that *sipiniit* were not raised differently than other children.

Kaj Birkett-Smith (1953: 94) makes reference to *aranu'tiq*, a gender category that does not fall within strict masculine or feminine gender categories but seems to be an admixture of both, in Chugach, Alaska. Birket-Smith classifies *aranu'tiq* as "transvestites[1]" (ibid.), but this terminology is reductive and seems to reflect a limited settler understanding of gender diversity. Their roles in society went beyond a difference in dress or a swapping of roles. *Aranu'tiq* were male on one side and female on the other, taking on roles assigned to both genders. In this way, they were seen as extraordinary, exceeding the abilities of average people.

Saladin d'Anglure also cited an example of a child in Nunavik who alternated dress between boys' and girls' clothing daily (1994: 94) and

another example of a child who wore the coat of a boy and the pants of a girl while learning to hunt and sew (ibid.: 92). These examples demonstrate not only the existence of gender complexity in Inuit cultures but also the fact that it is not adequate for archaeologists to model "Inuit gender" when there is so much diversity between Inuit groups in respect to gender expression and ideology, even within individuals throughout their lives.

In addition to economically motivated role-swapping, the fluidity of Inuit gender can be articulated through concepts of personhood. Newborn infants in many regions were not seen as brand-new human beings. Instead, they received part of their *tarnina* or *inuusia* (soul/personality/shade) from a recently deceased family member after whom they would be named. They were then regarded as being a partial reincarnation of that ancestor (Guemple 1979: 48–49; 1988: 134–135; Park 1998: 271; Saladin d'Anglure 2005: 137). Jack Anawak (1994) explains that children are generally given the name of a much older relative and are thus "twinned" (45) with that relative, and their relationships with others mimic the relative's relationships with those individuals.

If the sex of the child as assigned at birth does not correspond with the sex of that ancestor, then child *swaps* genders, adopting the style of dress and taking up the gender role that their ancestor filled in life (Saladin d'Anglure 1994; Stewart 2002: 20). Nancy, an interview participant from Labrador, recalled to me that

> one thing that I heard is . . . when a child is born, someone in their family who was predeceased by them—let's say it was a woman who had passed away and a little boy who was born—they would dress up the little boy as a woman. I don't know how long it would be, but I did learn about that.

Similarly, during one of my visits to Labrador, after hearing a presentation I gave advocating for the inclusion of LGBTQ2S+ narratives into Inuit archaeology (Walley 2017), a man from Nain approached me to tell me that the word for namesake is *atitsiak*, and that an *atitsiak* receives personal relationships of the person for whom they are named. For example, if someone is named for their father, another "person [speaks] to that person like it is their father even though the person is younger than them" (Frank Phillips, personal communication, May 2, 2017). This demonstrates the way that some aspects of identity and personhood, including their gender, might be passed on through the naming process. This is similarly noted by Giffen (1930: 58), who observed that personal relationships are more important than the sex of the child in the formation of their social identity. Similarly, many have noted the lack of gendered pronouns in Inuit languages (Crass 2000: 69).

Inuit *angakkurniq* and nonbinary gender

Much of Saladin d'Anglure's work focuses on *angakkurniq*[2] (Inuit shamanism), and the nonbinary gender status of many *angakkuit* (shamans, sg. *angakuq*). *Angakkuit* and *angakkurniq*, in some form, seem to have been ubiquitous across Inuit cultures, from Siberia to Greenland, prior to Christianization, and existed in some areas through the first half of the twentieth century (Holtved 1944; Oosten 1981; Oosten and Remie 1997; Saladin d'Anglure 1992, 2005, 2006). Although expressions of *angakkurniq* exhibited some degree of variation throughout Inuit regions, *angakkuit* can generally be described as conduits to nonhuman worlds; they were responsible for maintaining relationships between humans and supernatural forces or beings that intervened in human life (Holtved 1944: 23). *Angakkuit* ensured good hunting and good weather, drove away malevolent spirits that caused illness and misfortune, cured the sick, communicated with deities and the dead, and saw the future (ibid.).

Saladin d'Anglure draws a connection between the roles of *angakkuit* and gender nonconformity, stating that "by straddling the boundary between sexes and gender roles [the *angakkuq*] was capable of straddling all boundaries, between the world of humans and that of animals, between the dead and the living" (2005: 138). In this way, people who had changed gender roles were especially poised to become *angakkuit*. In addition, he notes that, in Nunavut, *angakkuit* were assisted by a guiding spirit of the opposite sex, who then helped the *angakuq* change their gender in order to be more effective mediators. This suggests that, in some cases, *angakkuit* were identified by their gender fluidity, while in others, the dynamism of their gender is more a result of the process of becoming an *angakuq*.

On St. Lawrence Island, Alaska, *anasik*, whose genders combined masculinity and femininity, were seen as particularly powerful *angakkuit* (Lang 1998: 165–166). While, in this case, not all *angakkuit* were *anasik*, gender fluidity was considered a protection against evil spirits (ibid.). The role of gender fluidity or diversity in helping to evade evil spirits has also been noted in Nunavik (Quebec), where individuals who were ordered to carry out executions wore clothing that contradicted their gender identity to hide from the vengeful dead (Saladin d'Anglure 1994: 98). In addition, *piaarqusiaq* in Greenland were children who dressed in an "outrageous" manner, mixing different gendered aspects of clothing after the death of a sibling for protection (Ostermann 1938: 191; Thalbitzer 1912: 558).

Saladin d'Anglure (1994) has discussed helping spirits as an aspect of gender complexity, noting that male *angakkuit* always had at least one female helping spirit. Having a foot in both camps, so to speak, better equipped *angakkuit* to transcend barriers between various worldly and otherworldly realms and to commune with spirits and deities.

Christopher Trott (2006) draws a homological relationship between polar bear (*nanuq*) symbolism and Inuit categories of gender. Trott notes that the

polar bear is a mediatory actor in Inuit cosmology in large part due to its ambiguous status as a mammal of both the land and sea. He states that bears "act as a transformational operator in Inuit thought that allows movement between two bounded, but open categories . . . such as gender" (106).

Trott maintains that there are two distinct gender categories in Inuit culture that align with binary gender ascriptions based in a complementary division of labour but expands this conception of gender to allow for the possibility of gender transformation and non-biological gender, arguing that personhood and gender are constructed through the naming process. Although Trott upholds the notion of bounded binary gender categories, as well as similar divisions between living and dead, and human and animal, he argues that there is room in Inuit thought for some degree of mediation between them and that the polar bear is symbolically related to this transcendence.

Gender and sexual complexity in Inuit storytelling

One of the most underutilized avenues of archaeological research is folklore and storytelling. This is due, in large part, to a reluctance to use "non-objective" forms of knowledge in our interpretations of archaeological materials. Following the processual turn of the 1970s, many archaeologists have striven to keep their research within the realm of western science, which, in large part, erases other forms of knowledge or views them as objects of ethnoscience. Depending on whether we understand how to use them, however, these forms of knowledge can be invaluable. By ignoring them, we are ignoring avenues through which we can explore the complexity of material objects and understand the past on the ontological terms of those who inhabited it or, at the very least, terms that are relevant to their descendants.

Jack Anawak (1994) discusses the Inuit outlook on the past, stressing the importance of the past in the present, particularly the importance of legends for passing wisdom from the past into the present and future, suggesting that many myths and legends have long-standing continuity. He contends that Inuit take folklore seriously because it teaches them how to live in their world and maintains a connection with the past, which is still active in the present. If we understand that folklore is of real importance in contemporary Inuit life and has been throughout Inuit history, it follows that we must hold folklore in high regard as a useful source of knowledge.

Folklore and mythology hold special significance within the realm of *angakkurniq*. Examining the traditional roles of *angakkuit* is futile without an understanding of the multiple worlds they occupied outside of what most southern academics would call a physical reality. In a sense then, we must understand physical objects as they may have acted in non-physical realms—realms that cannot be seen or examined directly by archaeologists but that must, nonetheless, be taken seriously in our research.

Whether we choose to believe in these realms themselves, they existed, and to an extent still exist, in Inuit ontology and, therefore, had effects on

the material world within which archaeologists function. In his introduction to *Interviewing Inuit Elders: Cosmology and Shamanism*, Bernard Saladin d'Anglure contends that shamanism is generally viewed as "primitive" (2005: 2) and in overlooking it as a serious topic of study, social scientists contribute to the loss and destruction of Inuit shamanic tradition (3). Moreover, he argues that the loss of traditional ceremonialism has had grave implications for contemporary Inuit communities (ibid.). With this in mind, I hope to contribute to a body of literature that takes all aspects of Inuit culture seriously.

Inuit stories, myths, folklore, and poems also contain themes of gender and sexual complexity. Folklore is often not intended to be taken literally, and these stories have often been passed down through many generations and told and adjusted by different voices, which means that they are non-static, and they cannot be taken at face value. However, instances where themes of sexual and gender complexity show up in folklore might be cautiously interpreted as testament that, at the very least, concepts of diversity existed in the distant past. Stories wherein people transform, change genders, have same-sex partners, and so forth attest to their presence in Inuit thought. It is, therefore, useful to look to these stories to begin to form understandings of what shapes gender and sexual diversity might have taken in Inuit imaginaries.

A notable example of LGBTQ2S+ themes in Inuit storytelling is the story of Aakulujjuusi and Uumarnituq, the first two people, according to some Inuit creation stories. As the story goes, Aakulujjuusi and Uumarnituq were both men, and their relationship was intimate and sexual in nature. Eventually, Uumarnituq became pregnant, and his body changed to facilitate birth; his penis split open and became a vulva, and he became the first female (Amarok*, personal interview, November 13, 2016).[3] This story presents themes of both sexual and bodily fluidity.

Another widespread story that is sometimes cited as having themes of sexual and gender diversity is the story of Nuliajuk, the mother of sea mammals, who is also sometimes known as Sedna or Arnarquagssaq. Although many versions of her origin story exist, the basic shape is that a long time ago, a girl and her father lived alone together. The father persistently attempted to find suitors to marry his daughter, but she refused each one. One day, the girl became pregnant, and the father asked how this could have happened, at which point she admitted to having an affair with her dog, who had gotten her pregnant. Furious, the girl's father threw her on his kayak and paddled far out to sea. He then tried to toss her off the side, but she hung on. He took out his hunting knife and hacked off each of her fingers, so she sunk to the bottom of the sea. As she sank, her fingers grew back as sea mammals, and she became the goddess of the sea, controlling sea mammals for hunting. When humans angered her, she would withhold animals until an *angakuq* was sent to the bottom of the sea, sometimes combing her hair to appease her, since she could not do so herself with her sea-mammal fingers (Laugrand

and Oosten 2014: 30–31). According to some, Nuliajuk has a female partner named Qialertetang, who is sometimes said to control the weather and care for plants, animals, hunters, and fishers. Franz Boas wrote about the appearance of Qialertetang at the Sedna Festival on Baffin Island, stating that she is "represented by a man dressed in woman's costume" (1901: 140).

Even in versions of the Nuliajuk myth that exclude Qialertetang, she is a compelling queer character for her refusal to marry and for her powerful centrality in Inuit cosmology. She falls outside of her cultural norms and, as a result, becomes a remarkable character. Through her marginalization, she is also afforded sway in the Inuit world. There are any stories where this is the case: someone who is different for their gender, sexuality, or social role gains specialness in the cosmological order.

William Thalbitzer (1923: 511–516), working in East Greenland, and Franz Boas (1901: 248, 323), working in Cumberland Sound and Hudson Bay, respectively, recorded similar stories of an old woman who decided to start living like a man, taking a younger woman as a wife. In the version recorded by Thalbitzer, the older woman physically transformed into a male in order to procreate with his new wife. Similarly, working in East Greenland, Henrik Rink (1875: 442) recorded a story about a woman who kidnapped her daughter-in-law and became her husband, disguising herself like a man until her son discovered them and killed his mother.

Grace Slwooko (1979, quoted in Saladin d'Anglure 2005: 136), speaking about Inuit from Siberia and Alaska, stated, "In the Eskimos' [sic] belief, there is another sex between man and woman", going on to explain that these people should be supported because it is the way they are naturally, expressing the notion that gender is an inherent aspect of one's identity. She also recalls a story about an individual who was considered biologically male but who felt instinctually like a woman. In the story, the Maker of All acknowledges this individual as a woman (although Slwooko uses he/him/his pronouns throughout the story), impregnating her with a baby whale. She initially brings her child home, but soon the whale becomes too large, and she allows it to swim in the ocean. Soon, the whale begins to swim far out and attract other whales to be hunted by people in the woman's village. One day, a group of hunters kills the mother's whale but, as a result of killing a whale that belonged to someone, they begin to sweat until they turn to liquid and disappear.

In addition to stories that directly tackle gender and sexual diversity, Inuit stories from the past frequently employ themes of fluidity in a broader sense. In many stories from all parts of the Arctic, humans transform into animals, and vice versa (Martin 2012). Frequently, animals disguise themselves as humans only to later transform back into their animal selves. Often, animals are said to live lives parallel to human lives. At night, they return to snow houses, greet their families, and remove their skins. These stories blur the lines between humans and animals. Inuit folk tales often harken back to a time when humans could easily transform into animals. This is, in part, a

reflection of Inuit concepts of personhood that are fluid and flexible. This fluidity comes through heavily in stories about and concepts surrounding *angakkuit*.

> The shamanic worldview was flexible and open, and the distinctions between various categories of non-human beings and different levels and scales of reality were always diffuse. Distinct categories (men and women, people and animals, land and sea, seals and caribou, etc.) were parts of the social world which was organized by strict rules that kept these entities apart. As soon as we cross into the non-social world of non-human agencies, these distinctions become problematic . . . a shaman could easily transform into an animal, interact with the dead, have both male and female features, and adopt any shape.
>
> (Laugrand and Oosten 2010: 376)

Similarly, one interview participant drew together themes of fluidity in Inuit storytelling and sexual and gender fluidity, stating

> I can't see how sexuality and gender could be exempt from that, when we believe that all these things could change and transform. . . . There are lots of stories of transformation. I can't see how that wouldn't extend to sexuality.
>
> (Amarok*, personal interview, November 13, 2016)

Jack Anawak (1994) discusses the importance of legends for passing wisdom from the past into the present and future, suggesting that many myths and legends have great continuity. While these stories are generally allegorical and should not be taken at face value, there is a lot of useful knowledge within them. They allow insights into the ways people might have seen themselves, their culture, and their world in the past. Since they are passed down for many generations, the themes that persist give us insights into deep pasts. As Keavy Martin (2012: 2) points out, it is becoming increasingly clear that settler academics should be taking Inuit knowledge seriously, not "only out of a sense of postcolonial obligation" but also because it can make serious contributions to our understandings of the past.

All of the previous stories demonstrate that Inuit in the past were thinking about diversity and fluidity in some sense. Whether a trans Inuit woman ever gave birth to a whale or Nuliajuk really shared her underwater abode with a female lover is irrelevant when considering this question; possibilities of gender and sexual complexity were awake in the minds of Inuit. They existed in the stories passed down to their children. Although the exact message of the stories is not always discernible in the present, nor are their meanings always intended to be clear to settler folks, and although details have been lost and changed over time, the remaining details shed light on diversity in the past, diversity that archaeologists too often choose not to pursue.

Fluidity in Inuit tool use

Returning back to the realm of Inuit archaeology, proxy approaches touched on in the previous chapter, which use the spatial distribution of men's and women's tools to *see* men and women in the past, have been overwhelmingly common. While the notion that we can so easily understand how identity played out spatially in the deep past is attractive for its simplicity and for the sense that we can understand people, their movements, and, therefore, their experiences in such intimate detail, these approaches are problematic in many regards, even if we ignore all of the evidence presented in this chapter thus far. These approaches require many assumptions on the part of archaeologists in order to hold water. Among these assumptions are the idea that men had one set of tools while women had another, that these tools only had single uses with distinct gender affiliations, that nobody swapped or borrowed tools, that gender roles were extremely fixed, and that spaces were rigidly divided based on a binary gender system.

After even rudimentary research or informal conversations with Inuit, many of these assumptions are easily dismantled. In fact, evidence points to a high degree of fluidity in gender roles in everyday life. The ability of most community members to take on tasks that were required of them regardless of gender and the sharing of tools not only make logical sense but are also attested to across anthropological literature and oral history. This is corroborated by some of the conversations I have had with Inuit community members. For example, an elder named John from Nain, Labrador, told me about learning from his mother how to scrape skins and sew as a child and how roles were more fluid than fixed. He recalled,

> It don't really matter if you're a girl or a boy. You've got to be interested. You've got to be interested in doing it. Like I used to watch my mom cleaning seal skins all the time. . . . I once asked when she was cleaning seal skins "can I try?" and her answer was yes. And she gave me the hardest one to do.
>
> (John Jararuse, personal interview, December 12, 2016)

Similarly, in a recent issue of *Them Days*, a community-based magazine published in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador, part of the transcript of a 1981 speech by the magazine's founder, Doris Saunders, was reprinted. The issue focused on gender, and in her speech, Saunders points to the fluidity of gender in Inuit culture continuing on into the present.

> There were five girls and one boy in our family, so my role was that of the oldest son. I grew up cutting and splitting wood, hauling water, tending nets, and whatever else a boy had to do to help his father. . . . We are all capable of surviving alone if we have too [sic], thanks to the fact that in our family there were no "girls" and "boys" jobs. From what

> I remember, and from what I've been told by hundreds of old timers in Labrador, it was much the same with most families in Labrador.
>
> (Saunders 2017: 31)

Attesting specifically to the fluidity of gendered artifacts and the inherent flaws in attributing an artifact type to a specific gender and in using these objects to map gendered spaces onto houses, one interviewee stated,

> Like the *qulliq* [lamp] being passed on to women as a way of coming of age, but at the same time men needed to have a *qulliq* too, to be able to survive when they were out on the trap lines. So there were these things, that even though they were termed as gender specific, like being given an ulu—but I know many men who have an ulu as well, so . . . it wasn't always about a gender. It was about where was your role, where was your purpose, how does this fit into the community, you know?
>
> (Denise Cole, personal interview, December 13, 2016)

Denise makes the point that having strictly bounded gender categories or roles did not make sense when it came to practicality. To expect functional objects to be used in a singular and gender-specific way is not realistic, even if it makes for simpler analysis on the part of the archaeologist. Similarly, another interview participant problematized the idea of organizing a household based on gendered spaces, noting that tools would have most likely been stored based on functionality and that functionality cannot always be conflated with gender, stating,

> Women and men had different tools. . . . Each had different roles, and I don't think that exactly entirely means always that it's reserved for men or reserved for women. . . . I think it's separated by function.
>
> (Amarok*, personal interview, November 13, 2016)

Another interviewee said that, while gender roles existed, they had to be flexible to work in Inuit culture:

> I remember my dad and grandfather would talk about women's work and men's work, and very much what the roles were. My dad was a trapper, so he would go out, and the women's job is to stay behind and take care of the household, but also at the same time if you saw a ptarmigan or a rabbit or something, you would go and shoot it, and you'd do some hunting as well. The lines are really not so cut and dry. Or like, sometimes you consider cooking to be women's work, but then if women are out, the men cook. So really it's like there were perceptions of men's tasks and women's tasks, but everybody did everything, and everything functioned. I can't picture Inuit anywhere saying "no, we can't do this work". It's just like "nope, we've got to do what we've

> got to do." That's the common thread I see in Inuit everywhere, is the pragmatism.
>
> (Charlie*, personal interview, November 13, 2016)

Another participant named Regina told me that she always preferred hunting to domestic activities and that she grew up going out on the land with her father.

> All my life growing up I had a lot of siblings, and I had a twin sister, and for [my father] the way I looked and the way I acted, he always wanted me to go hunting with him, go fishing, go boating, go anywhere with him, and for me I was more interested in doing any of that than staying at home with my mother and cleaning up, washing dishes, and washing clothes, you know, all that.
>
> (Regina Maggo Earle, personal interview, December 13, 2016)

These testimonies are disparate in some ways, demonstrating that there is no singular way to understand Inuit gender systems. They do seem to imply, however, that there is an underlying sense of culturally embedded yet flexible gender roles. All of this testimony suggests that the gendered proxy approach is an ineffective way to understand spatial distribution of archaeological sites. While some informants focused on the pragmatism often present in Inuit cultural attitudes, others focused on the ability for individuals to choose the roles they wanted to fill. The notions that roles were negotiable and flexible and that objects could be used in a variety of ways in a variety of contexts are both necessary pieces of information for archaeologists to take into account, despite the fact that they disrupt the simplicity of gender-based spatial patterning at Inuit sites.

Conclusion

While gender has long played into archaeological research, approaches tend to be fraught with subjectivity. The projection of one's own gender norms onto the past is a common pitfall, one which has prevented archaeologists from rigorously examining the gender systems as they existed within the cultures we study. I am not exempt from this process but hope to open up discussion by using my work to present alternatives to rigid narratives. Within the sphere of Inuit archaeology, there has been a rich record of gender research. This research ranges from being overly prescriptive and leaning heavily on western binary frameworks, to complex and ontologically nuanced. None of this literature, however, incorporates notions of nonbinary gender, which are simply too well documented to continue to be ignored or denied by archaeologists. In addition, themes of gender and sexual fluidity in Inuit storytelling hint at the presence of

more complex sexual orientations and gender identities in the Inuit past. It is, therefore, essential that archaeologists begin to move past simplistic models of gender and, at the bare minimum, allow space for complexity in our narratives of the past.

Notes

1 This is obviously outdated and problematic language today but was considered standard terminology at the time.
2 This was a term provided to me by an informant who chose to be identified as Amarok. Unfortunately, I have not found any textual uses of this word, but it almost certainly has regional variations not noted here. *Angakuq*, however, is a widely used term that varies throughout texts, often being spelled as *angakok*.
3 As several participants chose to remain anonymous, I have replaced those participants' names to protect their identities, indicated with an asterisk (*). Where participants have made reference to individuals who were not involved in the interview process names have been changed, with the exception of historical figures.

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3 Queer theory and colonialism

Queer theory can broadly be described as the body of theory which aims to dismantle normative categories and narratives that present restrictive social norms as natural (Blackmore 2011; Halperin 1995). Queer theory is, of course, most closely associated with LGBTQ2S+ politics and movements, having originally emerged from gay and lesbian studies and women's studies as a way to deconstruct gender as a natural set of fixed identities. However, with theoretical roots in post-structuralism, it can also be applied in a more generalized context as a means to problematize and reject normative categories that do not relate directly to gender and sexuality. Because archaeological research is heavily reliant on taxonomic classifications of artifacts, features, landscapes, and identities, and because its commentary on the past has the power to either reinforce or challenge naturalized social norms, the application of queer theory to archaeological enquiry has proven to be particularly useful.

Within the scope of academia, the recent visibility of LGBTQ2S+ people in politics has somewhat legitimized queerness as an area of research. However, mirroring contemporary social mores, queerness in research continues to be viewed as niche and faces ongoing marginalization in academia. Moreover, certain areas of queer research are considered more acceptable than others. Queer studies in archaeology have tended to focus on homosexuality in a time when homosexuality is becoming more normalized, while few archaeologists are willing to introduce multi-gender perspectives into their research, despite abundant evidence that they have existed throughout human history. When a social category is recognizable through our own norms, it is more likely to be perceived as objectively examinable. We implicitly accept our on norms as concrete. We are able to grasp them because they are familiar. On the other hand, social categories that fall outside of those norms are often viewed as flimsy and immaterial.

The work presented here is queer in that it aims to explore genders in the past that appear queer in light of colonial norms but also in that it complicates multiple normative categories often deployed by archaeologists and social scientists working with Inuit cultural pasts. Binaries come into our research everywhere and often form the basis of our analyses. The division

between male and female is an obvious example, being at the centre of this text. However, in exploring this topic, I have found that other binaries do not hold: past and present, rural and urban, traditional and contemporary, folklore and literature, artifact and artwork; if we structure our research with these categories in mind and uncritically assume that these structures exist and always have existed across time and space, then we inevitably miss a lot.

Since the early 1990s, queer theory has, like any other body of theory and literature, garnered criticisms that have forced it to grow and take on new forms. One such criticism has been that queer theory began as a white-centric literature, penned largely though the lenses of white and settler scholars who did not give adequate attention to the ways things like colonialism and race-based marginalization inform identity and positionality within identity-based communities. Through the admixture of queer theoretical approaches and decolonization movements, which have been instrumental in challenging the imposition of white settler values, a body of queer Indigenous theory has emerged. In this chapter, I discuss these iterations of queer theory from the gay and lesbian movement to the emergent body of queer Indigenous theory, highlighting its potential to inform gender and sexuality research in the context of archaeological research.

Queer theory

Queer theory, which broadly examines "whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant" (Halperin 1995: 62), emerged in the early 1990s from third-wave feminism, post-structuralism, gay and lesbian studies, and LGBTQ2S+ activism. Gay and lesbian studies emerged in the 1970s and focused primarily on LGBT issues, with the main emphasis placed on sexual orientations as fixed categories of identity. In the early 1990s, queer scholars began to direct their attention to questioning normative categories. In 1990, Eve Sedgwick wrote *Epistemology of the Closet*—now seen as a foundational text in queer theory—which questioned the binary opposition between homo- and heterosexuality, raising the point that sexual orientation only emerged as a dominant way of identifying people in the late nineteenth century. Through this work, Sedgwick not only explored queer history but also used queer theory as a means to undermine normalizing or naturalizing logics. Similarly, Judith Butler (1990, 1993) posited that categories of gender and sex are socially constructed categories or "cultural fictions" (1990: 179) that gain credibility through the repeated performance of these roles.

Subsequently, queer theory became a discursive tool for "challeng[ing] the very ideas of normality which underpin social institutions and practices" (Weedon 1999: 73) and, instead of focusing on social categories themselves, placed emphasis on the lack of fixity and constructedness of these categories. As a conceptual framework, queer theory, thereby, presents an understanding of identity and personhood as flexible and culturally contingent (Dowson 2000a; Fowler 2004; Sørensen 2000; Voss 2005).

Queer theory, which can be broadly defined as a multidisciplinary theoretical perspective designed to dismantle normative categories and naturalizing narratives, is no longer applied exclusively to gender or sexuality. While it is intimately tied to LGBTQ2S+ movements and politics and had tremendous utility therein, it has reached far beyond this sphere in recent years. It has proven itself useful in forming complex understandings of archaeological materials. Chelsea Blackmore (2011) examines queer theory and its rare (to date) but potentially important application to archaeology, using ancient Mayan households to "queer" the concept of a commoner, demonstrating that a singular commoner identity is both normative and reductive and must be replaced with a more complex understanding of the variation and mutability of identity expression in the archaeological record.

While queer theory can be used to effectively explore sexuality and gender identity in the archaeological record, Blackmore demonstrates that its potential goes far beyond these applications and should be more broadly applied as a way of transcending normative categories in all facets of archaeological research. This is more in keeping with notions of a queer theory that breaks away from the queer subject, turning its attention away from LGBTQ2S+ identity politics and refocusing on the resistance against categorization and the dismantling of normative notions of personhood. Blackmore states, "Queer theory's impact is in its potential to disrupt ALL normative archaeological practice, not just those related to sex, sexuality, and gender" (79).

Similarly, Thomas Dowson (2000b; Fowler 2004; Sørensen 2000) contends that the process of queering archaeology is not merely a matter of "digging for homosexuals" (165) but that incorporating queer theory into archaeological research and practice allows us to examine practices that fall outside of present norms. While Dowson largely addresses identity, this thinking can be extended to all forms of normative categorization.

The primary objectives of this book are twofold, and both are intrinsically tied to queer theoretical research. The first objective—to develop ways that archaeologists can look at Inuit gender more accurately—is mainly academic in scope. This problem is broadly related to the way that we create and apply the normative categories through which we understand archaeological materials. Instead of understanding Inuit cultural materials based on Inuit values, settler archaeologists have uncritically based many interpretations within a white settler value system. The application of queer theory might, therefore, allow us to construct more ontologically accurate models of gender that better reflect precontact Inuit concepts of identity. In order to achieve this goal, we need to start moving away from rigid gender categories altogether and instead begin to conceive of gender as a system comprising multiple roles with room for movement between and outside of them.

The second objective—to explore the potential impacts of queer archaeological research on the Inuit present—is related to LGBTQ2S+ and decolonization politics—namely, the impacts that our understandings of how gender and sexuality functioned in the past influence the way we see it in the

present. In particular, I address the notion that queerness was not part of the Inuit past, how that notion is deeply harmful to LGBTQ2S+ Inuit, and how archaeological research can either reinforce or dismantle that perception. Thus in the present context, I utilize queer theory both as a means to explore LGBTQ2S+ identities (queer studies in the sense that it relates to the queer subject) and to push past normative categories that are applied throughout the process of archaeological research (queer theory as subject-less critique).

Queer Indigenous studies as a mode of decolonization

Many scholars have made the observation that queer theory often fails to adequately account for experiences of marginalization arising from things like race, class, and ethnicity (Barnard 1999; Blackmore 2011: 78; Munoz 1999; Nagel 2000). However, in recent years, a body of literature encompassing queer Indigenous studies and Two-Spirit identity has begun to emerge. Much of this literature is written from a Native American or First Nations perspective and was not written to specifically include discussions of Inuit identity. I am utilizing this body of literature because I believe it is applicable in many ways to Inuit gender and sexual diversity since it engages with the topics of contested Indigenous identities, colonization, biopower, and non-white queerness. It is also relevant in its focus on the diversity of Two-Spirit identities, and I feel it is necessary to touch on Two-Spirit movements since some of the people I interviewed for this thesis identify as Two-Spirit. However, I would be remiss if I failed to note that the majority of the literature I draw upon in this section is not written by Inuit. I do not wish to engage in a homogenization of Indigenous North American cultures by assuming everything written about queer Indigeneity is directly relevant in Inuit contexts—nor do I wish to present "Inuit culture" as monolithic or homogenous. Inuit culture is its own, and there is a tremendous degree of variation even within Inuit culture throughout the Arctic. The exact mechanisms and impacts of colonialism are highly varied and the LGBTQ2S+ movements taking place in Inuit communities cannot be viewed as homogenous with other Indigenous LGBTQ2S+ movements. With that all said, I encourage a sense of caution with respect to pan-Indigenous narratives in scholars who wish to discuss queer Indigenous identities within particular cultural contexts, and I hope that the degree of caution I have exercised is both adequate and appropriate.

Gender and sexuality are constructed in settler society in ways that bolster settler colonialism (Morgensen 2011: 31). Through the imposition of settler frameworks and the erasure or violent suppression of Indigenous gender and sexual diversities, a colonial biopolitics has taken shape and been reinforced from the time of first contact with white settlers into the present. Smith (2011: 61) states,

> It has been through sexual violence and through the imposition of European gender relationships on Native communities that Europeans were

> able to colonize Native peoples in the first place. If we maintain these patriarchal gender systems, we will be unable to decolonize and fully assert our sovereignty.

Similarly, if we are to decolonize archaeological research, we must do away with restrictive white settler notions of what gender and sexuality comprise. If we are to come close to an accurate picture of the past—that is, one that reflects Inuit values and works to dismantle the power structures of white settler colonialism—then we must seriously re-evaluate the way we understand precontact sex, gender, spirituality, and modes of identification.

In order to give recognition and weight to Indigenous identities, we must understand these structures and dismantle them. Only by decolonizing Indigenous genders and sexuality can we begin to understand the past in a truthful and culturally specific way.

Part of the reason Inuit gender had been slotted into a binary framework and gone unquestioned for so long can be traced back to the early ethnographies written about Inuit, penned, predominantly, by white men. Of the many early accounts of Inuit cultures, none adequately address the presence of nonbinary genders. On occasion, there is mention of people who do not fit entirely within the gender role expected of them by the ethnographer. In Diamond Jenness' widely referenced ethnography *Life of the Copper Eskimos* (more accurately known as the Innuinait) (1922), he encounters women who go hunting and sealing with men (88) and notes that he has occasionally seen men sewing and working hides (88). Without a thorough understanding of Inuit gender, it is difficult to tell what other aspects of gender diversity he may have encountered without even recognizing them. When one is understanding culture through a settler lens, which does not include any gender expressions or identities outside of a binary framework, the diversity that does exist is simply slotted into binary categories and that diversity becomes all but invisible. As Jack Halberstam writes,

> In a way, gender's very flexibility and seeming fluidity is precisely what allows dimorphic gender to hold sway. Because so few people actually match any given standards for male or female, in other words, gender can be imprecise and therefore multiply relayed through a solidly binary system. At the same time, because the definitional boundaries of male and female are so elastic, there are very few people in any given public space who are completely unreadable in terms of gender.
>
> (20)

Although Halberstam's commentary grow from experiences within a settler society, and they articulate the issue of erasure of gender complexity therein, their general argument is applicable to erasures in ethnographic research. The same mechanisms that make it difficult to look at people in settler society as having complex and non-straightforward gender identities are those

which made it difficult for ethnographers to experience and understand gender complexity in an Indigenous North American context. By working through the framework of binary gender and bringing those structures into their research as a given, ethnographers were unable to capture the full range of Indigenous gender expressions and instead reduced them and brought them into accordance with European norms. This was an insidious process because it was probably not intentional but, nonetheless, perpetuated a simplistic and inaccurate idea of how gender was expressed universally.

This is due, in large part, to naturalization narratives that we are fed. Settler biopolitics are largely constructed through western scientism and biological reductionism and grounded in our narratives of sex as natural, biological, and non-cultural. We have come to understand our bodies as belonging to one of two sexes based on physical attributes, and this has become one of the major axes of identity within white settler culture. On top of the biological expressions of our bodies, we have layered gender, which we recognize to be both cultural and mutable, but through its associations with fixed sex, it gains credibility as an extension of *natural* structures.

Contemporary LGBTQ movements as neocolonialism

Due to current politics surrounding LGTBQ2+ rights, and particularly emergent focuses on gender complexity in dominant settler discourse, the timing of my research seems tremendously auspicious. Indeed, this political climate and my positionality within the queer community have contributed greatly to my interest and understanding of the subject matter of this thesis. In addition, many of the people I have interviewed have noted that southern movements for LGBTQ2S+ rights have contributed to the level of acceptance they receive within their communities. For example, one participant stated,

> [Today] folks can feel more comfortable with Inuit pride and culture and all of this from a younger age, and also at the same time, there's a movement in Canadian culture to being more comfortable with LGBTQ folks and I think the two of these trends happening at the same time can only help more young Inuit.
>
> (Charlie*, personal interview, November 13, 2016)

Here Charlie* raises the point that LGBTQ2S+ politics in broader Canadian culture contribute to LGBTQ2S+ politics in the north. However, his drawing in of Inuit cultural revitalization also hints at an important point to recognize: queer politics cannot be applied uniformly to different cultural groups. To expect all Inuit to uncritically accept *qallunat* (white or non-Inuit) notions of queerness and LGBTQ2S+ politics would be a step in the wrong direction and a further perpetuation of the same system of colonialism that first imposed restrictive white settler notions of gender

and sexuality on northern communities to begin with. Queer Indigenous studies have emerged as a distinct area of queer research that has tied normative categories of gender and sexuality to colonialism and sought to define identity on Indigenous terms instead. This assertion of culturally specific gender and sexual identity has been instrumental in decolonization discourse.

Gender and sexuality politics in settler culture have shifted in recent years, and as LGBTQ2S+ folks have fought for our recognition, rights, and acceptance, queerness has become more normalized. We tend to view this as being a progressive move away from cisheteronormativity and towards a more inclusive structuring of society. As a part of this struggle, we have often enlisted accounts of gender and sexual diversity in various cultures to attest to the naturalness of our own expressions and identities.

Although it can be useful to point to diversity in order to attest to the fact that there is no singular system of gender expression and sexuality that is *natural*, this move can be problematic in that it often equates settler queerness with Indigenous queerness, reducing Indigenous sexual diversity to mirror settler diversity (Morgensen 2011). Brian Gilley (2006: 25) similarly points out that white LGBTQ+ communities have used notions of Indigenous gender and sexual diversity as a symbol of the opposition of queer intolerance in western society since the 1980s and that, while this framing may have been useful to non-Indigenous LGBTQS+ politics, it has contributed nothing to Indigenous LGBTQ2S+ folks, nor did it create space for them within the dominant LGBTQ2S+ culture. In this case, the use of gender and sexual diversity was an act of appropriation, an example of a settler community using Indigenous identities to legitimize their own, while forgetting about Indigenous people themselves.

In addition to the issue of appropriation, it is part of a broader trend in western scholarship to view Indigenous practices and ways of being as *primitive*, allowing us glimpses into western pasts (Deloria 1996: 41) and the use of Indigenous gender and sexual diversity as a commentary on settler culture not only frames Indigenous cultures as regressive but also fails to account for the tremendous variability within and between cultures. In thinking about gender and sexual diversity, it is essential that we situate our definitions and perceptions within culturally specific frameworks.

Morgensen (2011) further states that settler queer identities are based in opposition to settler cisheteronormativity. When we position Indigenous gender and sexual diversity as an analogue to settler queerness, we effectively uproot Indigenous identities and continue to slot them into a settler framework. In other words, when we use Indigenous gender and sexual complexity as a discursive means to legitimize settler queerness, we whitewash Indigenous forms of identity. Even if this work appears to be progressive in its inclusion of genders that are nonbinary and sexualities that are non-hetero, it is, in practice, a modern iteration of colonial biopolitics that

removes Indigenous and gender expressions from their own cultural contexts and places them within a settler framework (Morgensen 2011: 31).

Andrea Smith (2011) notes that while Native studies have sometimes incorporated Two-Spirit identity and narratives of gender and sexual diversity, there is tremendous untapped potential in intersecting Native studies with queer theory since it has the power not only to assert Indigenous LGBTQ2S+ identity but also to destabilize settler colonialism. Smith argues that, like queer theory, Native studies can and should become a subject-less critique and rather than simply studying Indigenous peoples, it should focus on destabilizing normalizing logics, especially the normalizing logics of settler colonialism (46–47). Indigenous studies merged with queer theory is better poised to do so than queer theory alone since the subject-less nature of queer critique and its movement away from identity politics often erase white privilege and, therefore, retrench white supremacy (47).

Colonial erasure of queer indigeneity

In his three-volume series *The History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault explores the construction of sex and sexuality in the west since antiquity and its instrumentality in state power. He argues that the way we conceptualize and talk about (or do not talk about) sexuality is a mechanism of this power, (Foucault 1978: 150), describing this as *biopower*, which he defines as "an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations" (Foucault 1978: 140). While Foucault has received criticism for being Eurocentric in his approaches (Legg 2007; Young 1995), queer Indigenous scholars have utilized the term in discussions of the colonial subjugations of Indigenous sex, gender, and sexualities.

Finley (2011) asserts that Indigenous sexualities and genders have been affected by colonial biopolitical structures, situating the colonization of gender and sexuality and the forced erasure of gender and sexual diversity as a significant aspect of the overall process of colonization. This process is ongoing and has taken many forms. Residential schools were instrumental in instilling fear and discomfort in Indigenous people when discussing sex and sexuality, especially those sexualities that are seen as deviant in the settler perspective (32). This was tied not only to the forcible imposition of white settler values on residential school survivors but also to the trauma of sexual violence that occurred in these institutions. He points out that this trauma is felt inter-generationally and is perpetuated into the present, as sexual predators and child molesters continue to target people in Indigenous communities. He states that Indigenous people have largely stayed silent about sexuality as a means of survival in colonial North America and that many tribal councils have adopted heterosexist marriage practices as an extension of state power (32). It is notable here that these colonial power structures have carried over to tribal structures and are enforced and

perpetuated from within communities. I argue that similar mechanisms are likely at play within Inuit communities.

Finley also notes that queer studies present opportunities and strategies for decolonization, deriving from its "critiques of heterosexism, subjectivity, and gender constructions" (33) but this body of literature has rarely included discussions of Indigenous sexuality. In exploring the historic and contemporary effects of colonial biopower on Indigenous genders and sexualities, Finley makes the compelling argument that "heteropatriarchy and heteronormativity should be interpreted as logics of colonialism" (33) and that the colonization of gender and sexuality is particularly insidious because it is often hidden. If social scientists take this statement seriously—and it is my belief that we should, as what is needed of us are contributions to decolonization rather than the perpetuation of colonialism through academic enquiry and discourse—we must necessarily do away with structures tied to state power and settler values as the starting point for our understandings of precontact identities. That is to say, if we do not move away from cisheteropatriarchal framings of the past, our work will remain inherently colonialist. I do not mean this exclusively in the sense that our narratives of the past will carry vestiges of colonialism with them in their misrepresentations of Indigenous identities—although I do mean it in that sense—but also, perhaps more importantly, that constructing narratives of the past that are reliant on settler values is an act of colonization in itself.

The term Two-Spirit was coined in the early 1990s as a way to express Indigenous concepts of gender and sexual complexity that was intended to allow gender and sexually diverse Indigenous people a way of identifying that was not rooted in colonialism, moving past settler terms for queerness that did not capture intersections with Indigeneity (gay, lesbian, trans, etc.) or anthropological terms that had marginalizing effects (Driskill 2011; Driskill et al. 2011; Finley 2011; Gilley 2006; Morgensen 2011; Rifkin 2010). In his writing about Two-Spirit identity and visibility within both LGBTQ+ and Indigenous communities, Gilley notes,

> Two-Spirit identity articulates with and manipulates ideologies of gay and Indian despite the failure of gay and lesbian culture to recognize Native Americans as an important aspect of their society, as well as other Indians' denial of Two-Spirit existence.
>
> (2006: 7)

Here Gilley articulates critical intersections between multiple aspects of Two-Spirit or queer Indigenous identity. While it might be tempting to conceive of Two-Spirited-ness as being a sum of queerness and Indigeneity, that does not take into account the differential experiences of marginalization or erasure Two-Spirit people encounter within different settings, nor the complex challenge of differentially masking aspects of identity to "fit in" within any given context.

Queer theory as subject-less critique

In addition to exploring themes of gender diversity and fluid identities, there are several ways in which I employ queer theoretical frameworks as subject-less critique. Throughout this thesis, I undermine several of the normative categories that are often uncritically deployed by archaeologists, including notions of singular cohesive "community" perspectives, cultural homogeneity, bounded spatial definitions of Inuit identity (very few archaeologists work with urban Inuit, despite large populations in cities like Montreal and Ottawa), one-dimensional functional classifications of artifacts, and segregation of the past from the present.

Community is a word that archaeologists use on a regular basis, but few of us consider what we mean when we say it. To many social scientists, the concept exists of a rural Indigenous community with a distinct set of views, traditions, and interests. This community has a cohesive sense of politics; what is right for one person is right for all, and each person is represented neatly by community leaders to whom they defer.

This concept allows us to make sweeping statements about what the "community" wants, erasing or ignoring the voices that differ from the dominant perspective. This creates an illusion that there is no diversity and no conflict within communities and that they can be defined in a clear-cut way. This is untrue, as this thesis demonstrates. As will be discussed at length in Chapter 5, LGBTQ2S+ movements sometimes create tension within Inuit communities. Some people believe that gender and sexual diversity were part of the Inuit past, while others say that queerness is not a part of "Inuit custom" (Gregoire 2014). By ignoring these differences, we risk creating narratives of the past that are homogenizing and violent towards people whose identities do not fit within stereotyped cultural frameworks.

Additionally, I did not do "community-based" archaeology in the sense that my research was not situated within a community. In speaking to LGBTQ2S+ Inuit, I chose to focus on community, not in a spatially determined sense but only in the sense that the participants had their queerness and their Indigeneity in common. Furthermore, the idea of community as archaeologists tend to use it is complicated by the presence of Inuit in large urban contexts. Too often, urban Indigenous people are seen as being "less Indigenous" or "less traditional" (a notable exception is the work of Marie-Pierre Gadoua, who does archaeological research with Inuit in urban communities). This is particularly problematic when considering topics like gender and sexual diversity since larger numbers of LGBTQ2S+ Indigenous people live in cities. One interview participant noted,

> Charlie* is one of my few gay Inuit friends. I find, actually, that most of us that, most of us that I have encountered that are gay and Inuk . . . are often urban Inuit.
>
> (Amarok*, personal interview, November 13, 2016)

Speaking more broadly to the danger of homogenizing Inuit cultures, one interview participant stated,

> Inuit are very very diverse, and each region is different to another, and what I'm saying, I'm talking about Labrador Inuit, and Amarok* is speaking about his region, but we're all so freaking different. Twenty years of archaeological research, or taken over a twenty year period, it doesn't seem like a whole big period of time but twenty years of somebody's life—a lot can happen in twenty years, and a lot can change in twenty years.
>
> (Charlie*, personal interview, November 13, 2016)

In addition to questioning the concept of community as bounded and homogenous, one of the primary goals of this thesis is to question the simplicity of gender categories as they are applied to precontact Inuit artifacts. In Chapter 4, I advocate that we step away from normative categorizations of artifacts based on functionality or gender attribution and instead look at them in more complex and holistic ways.

Finally, this work employs a queer sense of temporality. Archaeologists have a particular propensity to classify time periods. Through this process, we create discreet time periods that are internally homogenous and easy to classify. This creates a sense that there are distinguishable breaks in history and purposeful shifts to new technologies and lifeways, while also segregating the past from the present. However, this approach has many downfalls, especially in the context of Inuit archaeology. As Keavy Martin states,

> When we speak about the origins and history of our culture, we do so from a perspective that is different from that often used by non-Inuit who have studied our past. For example, in our culture we do not divide the past from the present so we do not like to use terms such as prehistory.
>
> (Martin 2012: 30)

In *The Archaeology of Time*, Gavin Lucas (2004) examines time as a theoretical concept, considering ways in which contemporary archaeologists understand and use it. Lucas problematizes notions of chronological, unilinear, and universal time, arguing that both relative and absolute chronologies falsely assume that time is linear and uniform (9), claiming that these divisions perpetuate existing power structures. Geoff Bailey also discusses archaeological concepts of time (2007) and embraces chronological approaches as a way of understanding the past at different scales. However, Bailey acknowledges the constructedness of these approaches and argues that our underlying goal should be to understand the past as part of our durational present (220).

The idea that time is not, in reality, divided into discrete segments is an important consideration in the scope of this thesis. The collections I examined come from Inuit sites dating to the "precontact" period, suggesting a distinct and immediate change at the time of European contact. By looking at precontact and contact periods as continuous and durational, however, a more nuanced understanding of the changes and interactions that have taken place since the time of contact can emerge. Furthermore, "contact" should not be understood as a singular episode that created a rift between two segments of time.

Lucas' statement that chronological concepts of time tend to favour dominant political narratives applies to discussions of the Inuit past. Precontact Inuit are often referred to as Thule. This is problematic in several ways (see Whitridge 2016), perhaps most importantly in that it suggests a discontinuity between Inuit in the present and their precontact ancestors. Calling these cultures "Thule" alleviates some of the responsibility of archaeologists to work with and for descendant communities due to this illusion of separateness.

However, the term "precontact" is also problematic. By separating precontact and contact periods, we position all Inuit history in relation to white settlement. However, in this thesis, I discuss colonialism as a driving factor for the suppression of gender and sexual diversity, making a focus on contact more relevant. Another reason I use "precontact" is that there are few other descriptive alternatives to this terminology.[1]

Conclusion

Gender is differently constructed in different cultural contexts. Settler values predominantly dictate that gender is based directly on biological sex and that biological sex is a static and concrete aspect of an individual's identity. However, social scientists have begun to accept that in addition to gender, sex is a socially constructed aspect of identity (Butler 1990). In different cultures, physical bodies are understood in different ways. In this light, it is not adequate to assume that settler perceptions of bodies as concrete biological organisms that can neatly be divided along the lines of biological sex apply to all cultures. While we might believe we are being safe or objective when we utilize western biological understandings of sex—sex that we consider to be prediscursive—as the default in Indigenous research, this "objectivity" is intrinsically informed by settler biopolitics. As Vine Deloria Jr. famously put it,

> In believing they could find the key to man's behaviour, they have, like the churches, become forerunners of destruction. Like the missionaries, anthropologists have become intolerably certain that they represent ultimate truth.
>
> (1968: 99–100)

If we, anthropologists, archaeologists, and social scientists more broadly, continue to restrict the degree of variation we see within Indigenous cultures and try to distil them down to simplified structural entities, we are carrying forth a colonial legacy. This colonialism, an ideological colonialism, is particularly dangerous because it is hidden through the naturalization of colonial narratives. When we carry our own social frameworks into our work without stopping to think critically about whether they are appropriate, we reinforce and naturalize colonialism and further bury a precolonial past. Instead of decolonizing our interpretations of the past, we are thereby colonizing it for a second time. Although defaulting to structuralist approaches to understanding past cultures is appealing for their digestibility, we cannot purport to represent cultural pasts without accepting their inherent messiness. In the context of this thesis, to say that the entire Inuit gender system was rooted in heterosexual pair-bonds, wherein cisgender men and women filled different but complimentary roles without overlap or exception, is to impose a colonial structure and disregard Indigenous narratives surrounding gender and sexuality.

By moving away from normative categories of gender and instead trying to understand gender and sexuality as they are situated within Indigenous cultures, we begin to move towards a social science that is decolonizing and subvert settler biopolitics.

Note

1 I would like to note, however, that I do not use a hyphen between "pre" and "contact". Hyphenated, "pre-contact" is a temporal augmentation of "contact", which is then placed at the centre. However, as one word "precontact" becomes more conceptual than temporal, decentring "contact" to some extent.

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4 Approaching gender and sexual diversity in Inuit archaeology

The previous chapter represents the theoretical underpinnings of this work on a multidisciplinary scale. Queer theory and queer Indigenous theory are theoretical approaches that can be applied to a wide range of subject matters. While this chapter is similarly focused on unpacking previous work surrounding gender and sexuality and on moving towards an understanding of how we can begin to dismantle normative ways of thinking around gender and sexuality in the past, this chapter begins to narrow the focus to the specific approaches we might take to examining gender and sexual diversity archaeologically.

Although anthropologists such as Trott (2006a, 2006b) and Saladin d'Anglure (1992, 1994, 2005, 2006) have explored the possibility of gender beyond biologically determined male and female categories in Inuit culture, these conversations have not pushed our understandings of gender far enough outside of prescriptive binary thinking. While both push the boundaries of masculinity and femininity and allow for flexibility, transformation, and mediation between two gendered poles, both cling to the underlying idea that the gender system is binary and that there is a third rare element *between* binary genders. While concepts of masculinity and femininity do exist in Inuit culture, we have rarely stopped to consider whether this particular approach to Inuit gender is ontologically suitable, whether it truly reflects roles within society and whether it aligns with the process of constructing personhood.

To clarify, I am not arguing that we need to do away with ideas about complementarity of gender roles in Inuit culture; there has been a tremendous amount of anthropological work and oral testimony that has attested to the existence of these roles (Briggs 1974; Giffen 1930; Guemple 1986, 1995), and—more importantly—Inuit talk about this dynamic often. Instead, I am arguing that more fleshed-out understandings of Inuit gender and personhood are necessary if we wish to see the complex functions of gender at an archaeological level. Allowing for a meatier narrative of what gender categories entailed, the actual extent of their boundedness, and their relationship with lived experiences of embodiment and biology in turn allows for an understanding of Inuit gender on Inuit terms. This approach may provide

an alternative to what anthropologists and archaeologists have tended to do, which is to utilize western culture and norms as a starting point, noting the easily identifiable disparities that exist within Indigenous or non-western cultures and clumping diversity into a singular "third" category.

In looking at this set of problems, I argue that the central issue is western scholars' continued reliance on structuralist foundations. Structuralism is appealing for its neatness. The goal of structuralism is to tie culture up into clean and digestible packages for social scientific consumption. In the apparent mess of culture, we can find solace in the idea that there is order, that all things are interrelated, and that if we spend enough time looking, we will be able to crack the code. The structures imagined by social scientists consist of normative categories and therefore benefit from the clear-cut explanatory powers of these categories.

However, structuralist approaches to anthropological and archaeological research are created by western academia and are in turn consumed by western academics. As social scientists, we parse entire cultures and come up with categories that make sense to us; we sterilize societies composed of multitudinous personalities, agencies, complex thought, and wide-ranging practices into grade-school groupings that are meant to apply to each and every culture: subsistence, trade, kinship, social structure, and religion. Similarly, archaeologists divide artifacts into discreet functional categories that make sense to us and cut out all the extra "noise".

Archaeologists who engage with queer studies have sometimes argued that we should be trying to think in terms that do not rest upon identity or the naming of categories (Marshall 2000: 224). My engagement with queer theory has necessarily been situated in questions of identity; for the purposes of this research, I do not wish to evade categories entirely. However, where archaeologists do examine social structures, we must do so critically to avoid historicizing present norms and structures as dominant or natural through time and space. If we intend to examine the structuring of any given society and the multifold identities that form it, we must do so in a way that reflects the ontologies and structures of that society. In addition, we must acknowledge that that categories, in reality, are necessarily fuzzy and that any category we work with represents a reduced version of reality.

In that sense, I do see value in the notion that there is interconnectedness between different aspects of any given culture. However, it is my contention that anthropologists and archaeologists have too frequently misunderstood interconnectedness, imposed white settler categories, and sterilized variability in the past. In addition, approaches aimed at describing entire cultures and societies within the space of a monograph and a few academic papers tend to violently underwrite the degree of agency that individuals have in their own lives. If we are to apply ideas of structuredness and interconnection between components of culture to Inuit archaeology, we must use structures that actually existed in Inuit culture in the past. Furthermore, we must not understand social categories as being bounded, nor should we

take stasis of these categories for granted. One of the most damaging things social scientists can do with our research is to categorize people in reductive or inappropriate ways and to paint Indigenous communities as simplistic, homogenous, and static.

Turek (2016) makes the argument that archaeological interpretations of gender frequently rest on the assumption that gender is formed on the basis of what we think of as biological sex, pointing out that anything falling outside of that pattern has been viewed as a deviation. The author argues that the term "transsexualism" developed in societies that only recognized binary gender categories as real and natural, while many other cultures have had ready-made categories for people whose identities did not fit within a binary gender framework that naturalizes the imposition of genitalia-based social categories. While western society tends to other people who do not fit within cisgender binary heterosexual roles by creating alternative, deviant categories that are viewed as unusual, various cultures have included these identities in their norms. Instead of viewing the Inuit gender system as binary with a tertiary role, we should be viewing it as a complex gender system with multiple roles that were all equally natural and valid and seeking to more accurately understand what it might have looked like at various points in the past. As argued by Turek, by viewing gender through a lens that corresponds with a "former reality" (340), we avoid othering people who were not, in their cultural context, viewed as other.

While social scientists have long recognized gender and sexual diversity in Indigenous North American cultures, this understanding has rarely been on Indigenous terms. Anthropological accounts of nonbinary gender tend to be heavily coloured by Eurocentric ideas about gender. Anthropologists have used the term *berdache*[1] to describe Indigenous people who did not fit within their own understanding of gender. This term originated in the seventeenth century when fur traders and explorers in North America began to encounter people they could not slot into their binary understanding of gender. In order to describe these people, they haphazardly applied the French term for gay men. This term stuck and was used well into the twentieth century, despite its inaccuracy, cultural non-specificity, and colonial roots (Jacobs 1968).

In anthropological literature today, nonbinary gender or gender complexity is frequently referred to as *third gender*. Despite the frequent usage of this term, it generally makes little sense in the cultural contexts to which it is applied. Considering alternative genders, in all of their manifestations, as *third* reinforces the notion that there are two genders, that they are natural, and that anything existing outside of those genders is an offshoot of a binary system. Labelling a gender as *third* denaturalizes that gender and lumps it together with every other manifestation of nonbinary gender, regardless of its actual similarity to those gender roles. Many cultures have more than three genders, and they are not always constructed along the lines of a static understanding of biological sex. As I discussed in the previous chapter, Inuit

cultures throughout the Arctic have multiple distinct manifestations of nonbinary gender, and these differ temporally, spatially, and contextually (Holm 1914: 67; Robert-Lamblin 1981; Saladin d'Anglure; 1992, 2005, 2006). It is almost impossible to draw them into a singular structural entity that can be considered *third*.

Some anthropologists have recognized more than three genders within a single culture, but they often simply introduce the concept of *fourth* gender to deal with this occurrence (Blackwood 1984; Roscoe 1998). The way that these gender categories are often understood and described is both reductive and cisnormative, equally rooted in the concept of naturalized binary gender. In cases where a fourth gender category is introduced, *third* gender is used to describe people who are assigned male gender at birth who take on the roles generally assigned to women. *Fourth* gender, then, is the term used to describe people who are assigned female gender at birth who dress and act like men (Hollimon 2006: 435).

In this way, concepts of *third* and *fourth* gender also perpetuate a sense of hierarchy in our language surrounding gender. Simone de Beauvoir famously wrote about *Le Deuxieme Sexe* ("the second sex"), wherein she argues that women have been treated throughout history as secondary, stating that men are considered the *first* or primary gender and the default for humanity, while women exist only in relation to men (De Beauvoir 1949). Although this work is somewhat outdated due to its reliance on the concept of binary gender and the uncritical conflation of sex and gender, the central aspect—the othering of women and the creation of a gender hierarchy—remains pertinent.

By calling genders *third* and *fourth*, we hammer home the idea that men are *first*, women are *second*, trans women are *third*, and trans men are *fourth*. By using the language of *third* and *fourth* gender, we are basing our interpretations in what de Beauvoir was attempting to deconstruct but doing so shamelessly. When de Beauvoir points to the fact that women are considered secondary, it makes us uncomfortable, because we can easily see the injustice inherent in this hierarchy.

Ironically, we willingly extend a hierarchical structure to people of other genders, applying the labels *third* and *fourth* as though they are non-offensive anthropological terms. We do not so easily see the injustice in what I would argue are violent categorizations, in part because we view nonbinary genders as rare, and, possibly, because we perceive them as belonging to *other* cultures. In this sense, *third* and *fourth* genders might carry with them an air of white supremacy. Othering identities that have already been othered is seen as unoffensive and even objectively reasonable, while placing this sense of hierarchy on white or western genders, as derided by de Beauvoir, is perceived as unjust.

While one could fairly easily make the argument that *nonbinary* is also a term rooted in the concept of binary genders, I choose to use it as a blanket term to try to capture the genders that have been ignored and erased in our studies of Inuit gender roles. It is my hope that we can eventually create a

language that wholly acknowledges gender complexity and expressions of gender that are culturally significant and not rooted in binaries.

Queer studies in archaeology

Due to the growing discourse surrounding gender complexity and nonbinary genders, some archaeologists have begun to consider the possibility of exploring multiple genders materially using a variety of approaches. One approach to nonbinary gender has been in the context of mortuary studies. Barbara Crass contends that burials contain "more information per cubic meter than other archaeological features" (2001: 105).

This information can be particularly fruitful in considering the formulation and expression of identity within specific cultural circumstances since mortuary contexts often blend bodies and embodiment practices with markers of cosmology, individual social status, and broader societal structure. If archaeologists engage critically with previously published information on burials and mortuary practices, there is a very real possibility that we can begin to reconstruct and understand norms and identities that are not necessarily consistent with our own. Of course, the danger in this cannot be overstated. Mortuary archaeology has too often been at odds with the rights and needs of descendant communities and has been a tremendous source of colonial trauma. No consideration of mortuary studies of gender should be undertaken without the direct request of descendants.

Mortuary studies and nonbinary gender

Several mortuary studies (Crass 1998, 2000, 2001; Doucette 2001; Hollimon 1997, 2000, 2001) have indicated that gender is not always clear-cut in these contexts. In a notable example, Sandra Hollimon (1997, 2000, 2001) explores archaeological evidence of nonbinary Chumash in California, citing two individuals who were sexed as male but also exhibited biomechanical markers of women's work, particularly in spinal wear patterns. These individuals were also buried with women's artifacts. Hollimon posits that they belonged to the social category '*aqi*.' *'Aqi* were members of an undertaking guild consisting of trans women, males who had sex with other males, males without children, celibate people, and postmenopausal women (Hollimon 2000: 182). Hollimon posits that Chumash society prior to European contact was organized in part based on gender and sexuality, which took complex forms. According to Hollimon, the roles of *'aqi* incorporated "nonprocreative sexuality, gender identification, occupational specialization, and supernatural power" (2000: 192). The presence of such multifaceted identities in the archaeological record illustrated the need to look beyond simplistic methods of analysing gender and identity in the past, as well as the need to view identity and personhood as mutable and culturally specific (Fowler 2004; Sørensen 2000; Voss 2005).

Other approaches to nonbinary gender

In addition to mortuary studies, archaeologists have taken up multiple approaches to nonbinary gender. An interesting example arises in an article by Hays-Gilpin (2002) describing Pueblo girls' coming of age rites, which occur at the time of a girl's first menses. At this time, an older woman, the girl's mother or another female relative, puts her hair into *boli'inta* or butterfly whorls. These are worn at ceremonial events from this time until marriage. Hays-Gilpin states that pubescent girls echo agricultural fertility, in particular the maize plants that will grow to bear harvest. This is tied to concepts of fertility and abundance.

While this, at first, appears to be a case of the structuralist concept that social practices are rooted in production and reproduction, the archaeological evidence tells a slightly different story. Examinations of rock art and pottery from the area suggest that these rites of passage extend back as far as 1,500 years, based on depictions of hair whorls in association with depictions of menstruation and occasionally female genitalia. Notably, some rock art also depicts what might be interpreted as bodies typically assigned male with the hair whorls. Due to the strong association between hair whorls and feminine identity, these could be seen as evidence of nonbinary gender. This seems to be corroborated by the fact that there are ethnographic accounts of Two-Spirit people or nonbinary gender among most Native North American groups, including several Pueblo cultures.

Moving away from depictions of the body as the basis for research on gender complexity, Preston-Werner (2008) challenges the male-female binary, arguing that multiple lines of evidence must be used to access the dynamism and fluidity of identity. She examines different types of stone sculpture found throughout Costa Rica, dismantling archaeological interpretations that rely on stereotyped notions of binary gender. This highlights the need to examine gender in a way that is culturally sensitive, non-prescriptive, and multi-vocal. These studies comprise a small portion of literature that demonstrates the need in archaeology to look beyond western constructs of masculinity and femininity.

Conclusion

There is relatively little to draw off of in the realm of archaeological discourse that addresses gender and sexual diversity. While these topics are becoming more common in archaeological discourse, they are still in their infancy. There is no doubt that with the elaboration of social discourse surrounding gender and sexual diversity, so too will archaeology increasingly explore these avenues.

Note

1 This word is now considered a slur. It is used here in order to recount a history of terms. Awareness of the term should enable the reader to revisit early ethnographies that refer to gender complexity and omitting it entirely would restrict that

access. However, I have otherwise censored the word to avoid undue grief for those who find the term offensive.

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5 Oral historical approaches

Within the scope of Arctic anthropology, the collection of oral histories is by no means new. Ethnographies about the Arctic have relied on oral histories for centuries. However, the collection of these oral histories has too often been rooted in colonial logics. The accounts of Inuit cultures penned by the first European explorers and anthropologists were largely written as a way to document the novelty of *exotic* lifeways for consumption by other white people of European descent. These accounts were always filtered through the colonial gaze, as the ethnographer took centre stage in the narrative. Tales of brave men travelling to strange lands to learn about the unusual customs of their inhabitants wound their way into white imaginaries, sparking excitement at how much remained to conquer.

Of course, these oral histories and first-hand accounts have been important, and they are still useful today for academics and descendant communities, the latter of which have often been separated from their ancestral knowledge and oral histories within their own communities. However, the narrative of the exoticized other that runs through many of these early ethnographies precludes any real sense of connection between the reader and the Inuit ancestors who are being profiled. Additionally, the stories and knowledge they share tend to be framed as collective rather than individual. There is little attention given to the fact that the way individuals tell stories is informed by their own experiences and positionalities within their communities. By writing the individual out of these accounts, ethnographers rendered culture static, with informants simply acting to relay information instead of articulating their own identities, relationships, and experiences. While there are more conversations about decolonization and focus on community-based approaches to research, this legacy of oral history interviewing has begun to shift but the colonial roots of anthropology and archaeology run deep.

In another corner of academia, however, oral histories have taken a different form entirely. The 1970s saw the emergence of feminist oral history projects. This research was undertaken because of the silences feminist historians saw at the time. History at the time largely comprised narratives of great white men and erased people with marginalized identities, such as

women and people of colour, who took it upon themselves to start speaking and documenting their own historical experiences. Since that time, oral history has generally been viewed as a way for stakeholders, descendant communities, and the public to establish agency in retellings of the past. Even within history departments, however, oral historical approaches are often looked down upon. There is a perception that oral history is unstable and unreliable. Scholars who take more traditional approaches to history often point to the flexibility of memory and write off the possibility of gleaning anything of value from oral histories.

Of course, this perception fails to take into account the fact that written history is always both written and read through a lens that is historically contingent. That is to say: words on a page can never be understood as an all-encompassing, concrete account of events; history is not, after all, a quantitative science. On the contrary, histories are written in a culturally and temporally charged voice. That voice is never unfeeling, nor is it politically neutral. To add a layer to the idiom that history is written by the victor—or, to be less idiomatic, that history is informed by positionality—history is also read by its subjects. Not only is the reader situated within a world that has been affected by the histories they read, but they are feeling, politically, culturally, and temporally informed participants in that world. There is no way to strip away that lens. Furthermore, as contemporary subjects of history are all too aware, tone cannot always be apprehended through text. Most of us can relate to the feeling of misunderstanding a friend, partner, or family member's text message because, as humans, the vast majority of us rely heavily on expression and physical cues for communication. When they are removed, the level of understanding between people is often limited. Applying that to the way we read and understand written history, it becomes clear that we are inevitably missing some of what is being communicated. This is intensified by the fact that we usually do not know the people who penned first-hand accounts of history personally and that they are usually writing from a culturally, temporally, and politically incongruent position, meaning that we fill in what's missing with our own beliefs.

Without delving into a full-blown discussion on why we bother with history if historical communication is so fraught, what this all boils down to is that history is important independent of its "objectivity". As humans, the way we position ourselves in relation to those who came before us, and the ways in which that positionality informs our worldview, has fundamental impacts on the formation of our experiences and identities. Regardless of the form in which we choose to consume that history, we realistically have to learn to sit with the discomfort of uncertainty.

I would also posit that downplaying the importance of oral history is a product of modern hubris. Humans have been transmitting oral histories for millennia. This is obviously a crucial part of how we communicate with each other and understand the world around us. If writing history would have improved this process across the board, every society would have devised

writing systems. The fact that not all did should point to the fact that oral transmission of knowledge does something that writing does not.

LGBTQ2S+ histories are often erased or downplayed in our narratives of the past, despite ample evidence that gender and sexuality have varied widely culturally, temporally, and geographically. Similarly, Indigenous histories are often recounted through the lens of colonial mythologies, creating distortion and erasure of Indigenous perspectives. While archaeologists have deployed oral testimony to an extent, I contend that this should become a more standard practice and that we should take advantage of oral history resources readily available to us.

Subaltern pasts

Sian Jones and Lynette Russel describe archaeology as a "means to access vernacular culture and subaltern understandings of the past" (2012: 268), pointing to the idea that we can access a variety of narratives that may have been suppressed or erased through the process of writing history. In this way, archaeology may be particularly important in the realm of Indigenous narratives of the past, which are frequently excluded from the category *history*, which we still define, in blatantly Eurocentric fashion, as written records of the past. This can be ascribed to the notion, however flimsy, that what is written is objective, while that which is relayed orally is subjective. Of course, we know that people can (and do) manipulate their written accounts to present narratives through their own lenses, whether it is intentional or inadvertent.

While archaeological narratives are subject to the same kinds of pitfalls as historical narratives, there is also a materiality to archaeology that allows us to explore things unwritten or forgotten. Of course, it is up to the archaeologist to seek out subaltern pasts and learn to understand material culture through different lenses. This can be dangerous terrain. Archaeologists are firmly embedded in colonial hegemony. We learn and develop ways to view the past at universities. Those of us who have access to archaeology, and those of us who thrive doing archaeological research, are, more often than not, those who fit fairly unproblematically into predominantly white, privileged, academic, and historically colonial institutions that value western epistemologies over all others.

In her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?", Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988) famously argued that there is no way for such academic discourse to convey subaltern narratives. Spivak problematizes the notion that western intellectuals are needed to *speak for* subaltern experiences, arguing that this bars the subaltern from speaking for themselves, which reinforces hierarchical or hegemonic structures. She also decries the academic tendency to portray cultures as monoliths with singular sets of views or goals, attesting to the breadth of agencies within any given cultural group.

These are, of course, uncomfortable topics for many social scientists; we are frequently guilty of these transgressions in our work. Indeed, anthropology

and archaeology are structured and taught in ways that encourage these modes of thought. Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss decolonial modes of archaeology in-depth, there are several ways in which I hope to address these issues within my own work.

Although it is sometimes tempting to write archaeology off as a neocolonial practice and abandon it altogether, it is my contention that archaeologists stand to make valuable contributions to past narratives that affect social and political circumstances in the present and that those contributions can be enacted for the benefit of descendant communities. Specifically, archaeologists can be helpful in community-led movements insofar as we have a specific set of tools for understanding and conveying the past. This thesis emerged from two main sources: 1) anthropological literature surrounding Inuit nonbinary gender and the lack of an equivalent in the archaeological sphere and 2) movements growing within Inuit communities calling for greater LGBTQ2S+ rights and recognition. While the former allows for the possibility of studying gender and sexual diversity in the Inuit archaeological record, it is the latter that attests to its necessity. While Inuit, many of whom are working outside of academic settings, are leading these movements and certainly do not need help understanding their own lived experiences, archaeologists standing to the side of them are poised to contribute, using our access to the past to supplement Inuit narratives while critically enhancing archaeological discourse.

Inuit LGBTQ2S+ movements

While it is my intention that this work might contribute to LGBTQ2S+ discourse within Inuit communities, it is important for me to clarify that it is a small contribution to a much larger movement. LQBTQ2+ activism and politics have been growing in the Canadian Arctic in recent years. It is particularly important to make this distinction because LGBTQ2S+ movements are often mistakenly historicized as being led by the white middle class, despite their tremendous diversity on a world scale, as well as within Canada (Tremblay 2015), including extensive Indigenous LGBTQ2S+ organization (Meyercook and Labelle 2008). LGBTQ2S+ organization has increasingly been taking place in northern communities. A number of activists, organizations, and Facebook groups have advocated for the inclusion of LGBTQ2S+ Inuit in their communities and a recognition of their history.

In 2014, as a response to a rainbow flag being raised in Iqaluit, Nunavut, city councillor Simon Nattaq controversially stated that "people tell me it is not an Inuit custom to be gay" (Gregoire 2014). Further controversy erupted when Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI) President Cathy Towtongie publicly endorsed these comments (ibid.). In response, Robert Watts, who worked for NTI's counterpart in Nunavik, created the Facebook page "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Community in the Arctic",

stating, "I'm ready to fight to make sure for once and for all that we belong to this society. We're part of this human fabric" (quoted in Rogers 2014).

Another notable organization that caters to LGBTQ2S+ Inuit is Safe Alliance. Safe Alliance is a community organization based in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador. It was founded in November 2009 in order to address issues faced by LGBTQ2S+ Labradorians. Denise Cole, one of the founders of Safe Alliance spoke to me about its inception, stating,

> [Another founder of Safe Alliance] was a social worker with Labrador Grenfell Health, and did a lot of counselling work, and what getting a lot of referrals from other counselors who were dealing with queer youth and weren't really sure how to help and what to do when working with their parents. . . . And how we actually started was to do it from a place of support and awareness and creating workshops to get into schools and to work with professionals and start to—almost like safe space training, but going a step further and really engaging the queer community and helping them become stewards and leaders of you know, teaching the rest of the community.
>
> (Denise Cole, personal interview, December 13, 2016)

The following summer, Safe Alliance held the first annual Pride celebration in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. Pride celebrations have expanded in subsequent years, with people from throughout Labrador attending. Although Safe Alliance is not an exclusively Inuit organization, it does cater to LGBTQ2S+ Inuit throughout Labrador through its Facebook page and events. Safe Alliance was the organization through which I made multiple contacts for interviews.

In 2016, a film called *Two Soft Things, Two Hard Things* began screening at film festivals (Woods and Yerxa 2016). The film is a documentary set in Iqaluit, and it explores LGBTQ2S+ acceptance and visibility in Inuit culture, focusing on the Iqaluit Pride Parade. The film, which was actually made by white filmmakers Mark Kenneth Woods and Michael Yerxa, takes its title from the Inuktitut words for lesbian (*qaigajuariit*) and gay (*angutauqatigiik*), translating roughly to "two soft things rubbing together" and "two hard things rubbing together", respectively. While some Inuit have expressed discomfort with the film's non-Inuit makers entering a northern community, staying for a few days for filming, and leaving, one interview participant observed that the fact that it was made at all attests to the fact that there are many Inuit who want to have this conversation and explore their LGBTQ2S+ history (Amarok, personal interview, November 13, 2016).

In the film, Inuit filmmaker and activist Alethea Arnaquq-Baril notes that the idea of Pride is somewhat contradictory to Inuit values, stating that Inuit tend to value humility over boastfulness. In saying this, she articulates the point that southern notions of queerness and LGBTQ2S+ expression cannot simply be grafted onto Inuit LGBTQ2S+ movements, but that Inuit cultural values should be considered within these movements.

Some Inuit politicians have opposed queer LGBTQ2S+ rights in the north (Laugrand and Oosten 2010: 362). Notably, in 2003, a Nunavut politician named James Arreak testified that many elders were against the "gay tidal wave" they believed would follow from the legalization of same-sex marriage, stating that being gay is not consonant with an Inuit value system since it discourages procreation (Laugrand and Oosten 2010: 362).

This seems to attest to disparities of some values within Inuit communities. While many people are pushing for LGBTQ2S+ rights and the legitimization of queerness within Inuit culture, others do not see it as traditional. It should be noted, however, that this is not necessarily entirely generational and that many elders are accepting of LGBTQ2S+ Inuit. Amanda stated,

> I had a lot of Inuit elders that I could turn to and when I came out to them it was like "oh it's okay", and giving me hugs.
>
> (Amanda Maggo Earle, personal interview, December 13, 2016)

The interviews

Developing a methodology to examine nonbinary gender in the archaeological record was one of the most complex problems involved in this research from a methodological perspective due to the fact that this was a largely unexplored area of research and very few archaeologists have tackled nonbinary gender at all—certainly not as the central focus in a large work like a book. Accordingly, then, both my approach and my goals shifted throughout the course of my research. This was largely due to the fact that I gained a better understanding of the subject matter as time went on and I adjusted my expectations of what I should be looking for materially. While my initial idea was to identify proxies for alternative genders in the archaeological record, I came to understand that proxies for gendered categories do not exist in a clear-cut way and, indeed, a focus on proxies was the problem with previous archaeological research on Inuit gender.

Instead, I needed to look at ways that materials conveyed complexity. In addition, my research is entrenched in a contemporary movement for the decolonization of Inuit gender and sexuality. In that sense, I felt the need to incorporate a more acute focus on the present than I had initially envisioned. In the end, I believe I arrived at an effective approach which allowed me to begin to interpret archaeological materials in a way that took into account their complex and various meanings while also understanding how my research is situated in the present and has the potential to impact Inuit, particularly LGBTQ2S+ Inuit, living today.

My research began with one underlying goal in mind: to develop methods of understanding and reading past Inuit concepts of gender in the archaeological record. This research is theoretically grounded in queer, gender, and postcolonial theories. As discussed in previous chapters, anthropological

literature, gender and queer studies, Indigenous studies, and postcolonial studies have laid the groundwork for this kind of research in archaeology. However, there is little actual archaeological precedent. Although some archaeologists working in northern contexts have acknowledged the suggestion that the precontact Inuit gender system comprised more than two genders and was fluid in nature, none have directly tackled this issue through the material record. This is because there are various methodological and theoretical hurdles to overcome in order for us to begin to look at archaeological materials through a multi-gendered lens—namely, we understand things as binary because binary gender has been naturalized; early European settlers, such as traders, missionaries, and ethnographers, understood Inuit through their own concepts of gender; and Inuit gender fluidity characterized by role-swapping is probably not easily archaeologically visible since gendered artifacts can still be interpreted as fitting within a binary framework.

Because so much of the archaeology of gender in Inuit contexts involves identifying proxies for gendered activities (Crass 1998, 2000, 2001; Hennebury 1999; Whitridge 1999), I began with the goal of finding proxies for nonbinary individuals. As discussed in Chapter 1, anthropological literature suggests that *angakkuit* presented complex gender identity in precontact Inuit culture. Because *angakkuit* filled a mediatory role within their communities, wherein their gifts allowed them to transcend boundaries between humans and animals, worldly and spirit realms, and between genders, I decided that *angakkurniq* was a good starting point for the investigation of nonbinary gender.

But the further I delved into this work, the more I found that a simplistic approach wherein proxies for gendered individuals are identified was inadequate and only perpetuated the notion that people can be boiled down to certain sets of artifacts. That notion does little to subvert a settler framework for gender but instead replaces the binary framework with an equally rigid tertiary one. I realized that it was necessary to understand all genders as complex, multifaceted, and interconnected. In addition, I realized that artifacts themselves are complex and have multiple meanings when placed in different contexts and that different artifacts communicate gender ideology in differing ways. I realized that the only way to begin to present a decolonized version of Inuit gender archaeology was to make a mess of the frameworks and understandings with which I entered this project.

It was important to include Inuit voices in this work in every way that was reasonably possible. This began with an emphasis on studying Inuit literature, myth, and oral testimony to develop understandings of the gender system as it may have looked prior to European contact. This focus was based on the principle of "never about us without us", or the notion that it is never appropriate to write about or study a people or cultural group without including their voices in that work. However, I quickly realized that simply reading work others had put out before was not adequate for addressing a complex theoretical and methodological problem. Because the

issue of precontact Inuit gender diversity is both potentially contentious, and because so few Inuit are on record speaking directly on this subject, I could not responsibly move forward with this work without seeking out Inuit input first-hand. I decided to conduct a series of interviews, aiming to speak primarily to LGBTQ2S+ identifying Inuit but also inviting other interested or knowledgeable people to share their thoughts, memories, and opinions.

Participants

Although the material aspects of this work focus mainly on gender diversity, I found it was appropriate to conduct interviews with any interested LGBTQ2S+ Inuit, instead of restricting my pool to gender non-conforming or nonbinary individuals, for a number of reasons. The first was logistical. The ability to come out is emergent, as demonstrated by my interview with the mother[1] of the only openly trans person in her community. It is only a recent phenomenon that sexually diverse (gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, or Two-Spirit) Inuit have become vocal and visible within their communities, and, generally speaking, they still often face a lot of stigma.

Second, I think it is presumptuous to segregate gender from sexuality since that might not be an ontologically accurate distinction. Two of the participants identified as Two-Spirit, a term used to denote non-colonial modes of gender and sexuality. In both cases, they tied their experiences both to their sexuality and their gender expressions and admixture of masculinities and femininities. Trying to disentangle those aspects of their identities to fit into neat categories of gender and sexuality is directly antithetical to the goals of this project.

Finally, some of the experiences of my participants speak to the broader issue of LGBTQ2S+ erasure in archaeological research. This work ultimately advocates for the incorporation of gender *and* sexual complexity into our understandings of the past while beginning a material investigation in the focused area of gender research.

Social media

For this work, I regarded social media as a research tool. This mainly took the form of following Facebook groups and Twitter pages that were run by Inuit and focused on LGBTQ2S+ issues, decolonization, and cultural revitalization. Through these networks, I had access to information from a much wider geographic range and was able to consider many different perspectives.

Similar to interviews, information posted on Facebook pages was often personal, anecdotal, and gave a feel for peoples' experiences and opinions.[2] This was an extremely useful tool for me starting out because it allowed me to follow and absorb information without inserting my own voice prematurely. By following Facebook groups like Safe Alliance and Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Queer—LGBTQ Community in the Arctic I was

able to begin to distinguish how people regard these issues, what some of the tensions within communities might be, and how I could appropriately approach and discuss the topic of gender diversity as an outsider.

One of the things that I found the most useful about Facebook pages was the ability to make connections with people and begin discussing my research with people who might be interested. One of the people I contacted early on was Denise Cole, one of the founding members of Safe Alliance. Denise, who is Inuit and identifies as Two-Spirit, is deeply involved in her community of Happy Valley/Goose Bay, Labrador. She was, therefore, able to provide me with insights of her own, help me make connections with other LGBTQ+ and Two-Spirit Inuit (while protecting their confidentiality if desired), and acted as an interview participant herself.

In order to identify interested participants, I posted an ad on the Safe Alliance Facebook page seeking LGBTQ2S+ and identifying Inuit who felt comfortable sharing their insights and experiences. My flyer asked potential participants to contact me directly or to contact the Safe Alliance Facebook page in case they were uncomfortable communicating about a somewhat sensitive topic immediately with a researcher from out of town.

In addition, I asked Denise if she knew anyone who might be interested in participating whom she might contact directly. As it turned out she had multiple friends who were interested in participating in interviews. She contacted these individuals and gave them my contact information, and from there, we were able to hash out details. I also spoke to two people, one of whom I met at a conference and the other of whom was a friend of his, who expressed interest in this research.

Interview methods

Many oral historians will tell you that the best interviews are those in which the interviewer does relatively little talking and where the direction of the interview unfolds organically. Having never conducted an oral history interview before, I entered into the interviews (somewhat terrified) with a list of questions, prompts, and general themes but hoped that conversation would unfold naturally and that participants would feel welcome to take the interview in whatever direction they wanted. I took this approach mainly to avoid discomfort and rigidity. Although I did have to keep aspects of the interviews formal, such as ensuring that consent forms were properly understood and filled out, I was able to mitigate some of the rigidity by inviting people to take the conversation in whatever direction they chose.

In addition, it was useful for research purposes to allow people to direct conversations since this often gave me insights I would not have gathered otherwise. As a researcher, if I adopted a rigid interview format, I would have potentially created an artificial emphasis on issues interviewees may or may not have found important. In addition, when interviews are too rigid, it often prevents those being interviewed from opening up and sharing

their own thoughts; in many ways, the questions being asked determine the answers received.

There are several things that might have stood in the way of this approach. The first is that a fluid interview dynamic would not have been an effective method had I been seeking comparative or quantitative data. My process did not allow me to directly compare different participants' answers in many cases since often the questions being answered, or the conversation being conducted, differed. This did not present a problem in the context of this research because I was less interested in the ability to compare answers between participants and more interested in building up a collection of stories and perspectives from different individuals. In that sense, this approach also allowed people to articulate themselves as individuals, as opposed to presenting LGBTQ2S+ Inuit as a monolithic social category. The expression of individuality in these interviews illustrates some of the dynamism not only within the LGBTQ2S+ Inuit community but also within Inuit communities more generally. It has been essential through this process for me to bear this diversity in mind, both within past and present contexts.[3]

The second potential pitfall of an organic participant-led interview process is purely logistical. As I came to know in the months following my interviews, transcription is a long and tedious process. I dramatically underestimated the time and energy I would end up putting into this aspect of my work. Some of my interviews were as long as an hour and a half, which could sometimes amount to a full day of transcription depending on the clarity and sound quality of the recording and on the speed at which interviewees spoke. I only interviewed eight individuals spread out over six interviews, so I had relatively little transcription to do. In cases where interview-based research involves a much higher number of participants, it might be necessary to develop more focused approaches.

The interviews I conducted should not be viewed as rigorously collected sociological data. My sample of interview participants was small and geographically restricted. I also found participants through personal connections and many of the people interviewed plausibly know each other and have similar backgrounds, biasing the sample. My goal in interviewing LGBTQ2S+ Inuit in this case was not to compile a detailed study or quantitative data. Rather, considering the relatively small scope of the project it was to begin to gain a qualitative first glimpse into some of the things LGBTQ2S+ Inuit deal with in their daily lives, what they have experienced in their pasts, and how they think a queer understanding of Inuit history might impact their lived experiences.

While I wish to avoid homogenizing Inuit cultures, the two data sets speak to different aspects of my research and are fleshed out with other sources from different geographic regions. In tackling material culture, I outline a broad approach that could be adapted for culturally specific contexts. In looking at LGBTQ2S+ rights, the people I interviewed were mostly from Labrador, although one individual was from Yellowknife. I have addressed

this topic with attention to other sources of information, such as newspaper articles and interviews from other parts of the Arctic.

While the interviews I conducted contributed critical perspectives and an invaluable dynamic to the research I undertook, there are many factors that can act as deterrents to archaeologists wanting to incorporate oral testimony into their research. I found that, by including an interview component, I was almost doubling the workload and the budget I needed to accommodate within the scope of a two-year master's program. In addition, I ran into issues that I did not foresee due to my colonial blindness and to my positionality as an overly confident graduate student.

One such issue was the feeling of being at odds, on an ongoing basis, with the research ethics board at my university. Entering into this project having little experience with research of this nature, I had naively assumed that research ethics boards were designed to keep me from doing harm. I put faith in that idea, which meant that I was not seeing the full scope of my responsibility in this process. It quickly became apparent that university research ethics boards are not always attuned to every type of research, nor do they necessarily specialize in Indigenous-based research beyond broad attempts to curb obvious racism. This first became apparent when my first application bounced back to me because they did not see the utility in opening my interviews with an invitation to participants to tell me about how they identify outside of the realm of their gender or sexual identity and to ask me any questions they had about who I was. To me, having this brief conversation felt like too little; I was asking people to open up to me, and I wanted them to have a chance to represent themselves and decide whether they wanted to trust me first, but a short conversation is not enough to create this affect. To do without it entirely felt violent.

Another blunder I encountered was when I was told that I should (preferably) get my participants to submit invoices for their honoraria directly to the university (as opposed to me paying them up front in cash and being reimbursed, which was actually the better option for me), which led to the university telling two Inuit women who were engaging in the politics of refusal that they weren't going to be paid until they produced proof of Canadian citizenship. I wasn't alerted of the situation until this had gone quite far, and I had to do some damage control. This could be a jumping-off point for a discussion on research ethics and considerations beyond REBs.

Furthermore, I cannot skirt around the problem that I was never sure, nor am I sure now, whether what I was doing is *right*. Functioning within academia and doing work outside of my own culture and identity means that there are always questions in my mind about how to do this the *right* way or whether that exists at all.

One of the approaches to oral history that felt most applicable to me, and to this project, comes from Daphne Patai, who somewhat critically points out that the primary innovation in oral history research in recent years has

been a focus on increasingly specific identity groups (Patai 2018: 48). Of conversations about the appropriateness of collecting oral histories from specific or marginalized identity groups, Patai contends that there is little potential to actually effectively address all of the ethical problems with oral history projects, stating that there is a relationship between researcher and research participant that cannot be wholly reconciled. The relationship to which they refer, of course, is the assumed authority of the social scientist who uses testimony in their work. In other words, there is always going to be an implicit hierarchy between researcher and participant, no matter how self-critical the researcher is. Their point is to say that we must critically assess whether the work at hand is *worth* it rather than deciding to do the work and subsequently trying to present the research methodology as an innovative solution to our ethical stumbling blocks.

This is not to imply that ethics are of no consequence. Of course, ethical considerations need to be at the centre of any oral history project. However, the argument that Patai makes is one that has echoed through all social scientific research (and, to an extent, all academic research) for years and has never been met with a satisfying rebuttal—the idea that research aimed at being subversive and liberating is always hindered by its affiliation with academic institutions, which are deeply invested in the maintenance of the status quo. Even these words may appear to be subversive but by disseminating them through a *respectable* medium like a published edited volume marketed to academics, the subversive aspects of this work slot into a safe, comfortable, and only mildly critical space where academics are used to functioning. It is intended to be titillating enough to provoke readers, but not so assaultive as to make them abandon ship.

So should we, then, simply abandon these pursuits? As much as I have wrestled with these questions, I do not think that is the optimal solution. Meaningful political work starts on the ground, and it starts most often with people who experience marginalization standing up and advocating for themselves, their rights, and their needs. But meaningful political work can be supported and representation can be normalized through research when it does not tout itself as the primary driver of political change. In assessing whether the work at hand is *worth it*, we must ask whether it can be taken up as an effective tool by the people who are providing their input, experiences, and testimony.

One of the primary goals of the interviews conducted here was not necessarily to uncover specific facts about queer pasts but rather to assess the needs of LGBTQ2S+ Inuit living in the present. This included considerations of whether this kind of research was worth doing, whether it was appropriate, how it interplays with more localized political climates, and what impacts it could have on the ground. This research, then, was invested in shifting which values and narratives are normalized. If nothing else, this book will act as a repository for a few oral histories that could be interesting and useful to other LGBTQ2S+ Inuit.

Heterogeneity of "community" perspectives

In order to contribute to these movements, responsible archaeologists must also chip away at our own overarching narratives of the past in order to make room for narratives that come directly from descendant communities. In doing so, we need to engage directly with people who are stakeholders in history. As stated by Jones and Russel (2012), when we do this, "social memory and oral history [become] the means to explore the histories of communities that had been subsumed or marginalized by these grand, national narratives" (272). Archaeologists' ability to engage with histories that have been hidden or erased is part of our discursive power in the present and, if we are willing to work both with and for stakeholders, our ability to contribute to broader social change.

As Spivak pointed out, we must also recognize that there is no such thing as a homogenous culture. Indeed, much of the time, interests and narratives within communities are at odds with each other. As archaeologists, we often have trouble accepting the fact that there is not a single correct narrative of the past, nor is there a unified community perspective that we can acquire and apply to our work.

Indeed, there was some degree of ethical difficulty inherent in the process of researching and writing this thesis. Of course, I gained ethical clearance both from Memorial University of Newfoundland's Interdisciplinary Committee for Ethics in Human Research and the Nunatsiavut Government; these are not the ethics to which I refer. Beyond the ethics regulations set forth by governments, communities, and universities, there lies the ethical discretion of the archaeologist. While research might be deemed passably ethical by a board or committee, it is still the responsibility of archaeologists to consider which voices they are emphasizing and which voices they may be suppressing. Social scientists must be aware of whose interests they are representing, their own motivations for research, and how different forms of knowledge might impact a certain community or group of people. The ability to assess the fine-grained ethics of any given research is dependent on more than simple board approval.

In this case, I was faced with the issue that some Inuit are supportive of LGBTQ2S+ rights while others are not. Of course, identifying as queer myself, I am pro-LGBTQ2S+ rights. However, my position as a researcher and my position as a queer person must be separate. I cannot inject my own sense of queerness or queer politics into Inuit movements because I do not have the cultural positionality to address these topics on a personal level. Therefore, my sense of LGBTQ2S+ politics must, in this context, come from Inuit, whose lived experiences can speak directly to the subject matter.

In the next chapter, I present the results of these interviews accompanied by discussions of some of their major themes, including colonialism, relationships with Christianity, and emergent movements among LGBTQ2S+ Inuit.

Notes

1 The woman chose to remain anonymous but is referred to as Claudia throughout this thesis.
2 I have not used information taken from Facebook pages without permission; following LGBTQ2+ pages with large Inuit memberships that tackled issues faced by Inuit allowed me to form preliminary understandings of the subject matter before I dove into interviews.
3 While my approach has been fruitful in the context of this research, it did, however, point towards a need for more rigorous sociological research to be conducted within Inuit LGBTQ2+ communities. Common themes that arose are discussed in the next chapter.

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6 Contemporary impacts of queering the Inuit past

So far, I have argued that the ways in which we retell the past invariably impact the way we see the present; narratives of how things used to be give us a sense of how things *ought* to be since repeated narratives have the power to naturalize or denaturalize behaviours and ways of identifying in the present.

Through interviews with LGBTQ2S+ Inuit and research surrounding contemporary LGBTQ2S+ movements in Inuit communities, I have expanded the focus of this work to include the potential social and political impacts of research that account for gender diversity. First I will provide a brief overview of contemporary Inuit LGBTQ2S+ politics and movements. The majority of this chapter will be devoted to the discussion of major themes and common sentiments explored in interviews. While I have synthesized the data collected, I would like to point out that I am deeply indebted to those who participated in the interviews. They spoke to me candidly and expressed their experiences and their views more eloquently than I could possibly achieve in a summary. As such, I have used a large number of direct quotations in this chapter, some short, some quite lengthy. The intention here is to provide the reader direct insights into the ways the participants spoke about their identities and to ensure that Inuit voices are centred in this discussion.

In Chapter 2, I discussed the colonial impacts on queer Indigenous identities as it is theorized by queer Indigenous scholars. One of the central arguments was that by suppressing queerness—by controlling and subduing complex bodies, sexualities, and genders and imposing white settler values—colonizers were able to control Indigenous populations more effectively. Through these interviews, I have gained some anecdotal insight into the impacts of these actions on the present and how these colonial attitudes are still prevalent in the present, if more deeply engrained.

When we consider the impacts of colonization, we tend to envision a one-way process in which the colonizers have a direct and sudden impact on the colonized. This model of colonization tends to strip Indigenous peoples of their agency and erases the resiliency of their cultures. This is particularly inaccurate in the context of Inuit culture. Rachel Qitsualik, an Inuit writer

from Iglulik, states, "Inuit are the embodiment of adaptability itself, and other people who direct an eye toward the Arctic . . . would do well to emulate such plasticity" (Martin 2012: 8). While ongoing colonization has had many devastating impacts, and I do not wish to downplay the colonial traumas experienced by many Inuit living through to the present, colonization should be understood as a complex process with which Inuit cultures and values interacted. Some participants spoke about how explorations of LGBTQ2S+ Inuit heritage were part of a broader decolonization and cultural revitalization movement. One person stated,

> I think this is a part of it, this is an aspect of Inuit culture and identity that we should reclaim, that we should learn more about at the very least.
>
> (Charlie*, personal interview, November 13, 2016)

Similarly, Denise talked about her identity in relation to colonialism and decolonization, saying,

> I think of these quotes that I hear from different aboriginal leaders, like "You tried to kill us but we've still survived", or "you've tried to stomp out our culture and yet somehow our culture still is here". There's a lot to be said for that. What's been lost will adapt to where it needs to be. I have to believe in that because if you didn't you would just be a tortured, tormented soul about how much is lost. I think it's okay and important to grieve it. And I certainly, for myself, like when I started to understand being Two-Spirited, or I started to understand all of the injustices that's been done to my people over time from colonization, there's a grieving I had to have, like I had to let that happen. I had to work through it to be able to come out the other side because if not you would just stay in a very angry, hurt, a very destructive place and that's, again, to me, part of the tactic to keep people away from their true purpose, from their culture, from building relationships with people who could be allies, and perpetuating that colonized hatred that's allowed us to be on the wrong side for way too long.
>
> (Denise Cole, personal interview, December 13, 2016)

Christianity

Through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many *qallunaat* in the Arctic, including explorers, whalers, and ethnographers, noted that Inuit culture, and Inuit shamanism in particular, were in decline (Oosten et al. 2006: 445). Missionaries endeavoured to wipe out shamanic practice in favour of Christianity. From the time of the arrival of *qallunaat*, the extinction of *angakkurniq* was perceived as inevitable. By 1904, Edmund James Peck, a missionary working in Cumberland sound, believed that shamanism was

"on its last legs" (quoted in Oosten et al. 2006: 453). Because colonialism and Christianization were enacted differently in different parts of the Arctic, *angakkurniq* was still practiced in some places until the middle of the twentieth century. In many cases, the shift to Christianity was traumatic, involving forced relocation and settlement of entire communities, as well as residential schooling.

This trauma is still felt today. In her article on her acquisition of traditional facial tattoos, Ashleigh Gaul (n.d.) notes that within a generation, the elaborate tattoos that adorned Inuit faces and bodies were transformed from an expression of Inuit identity and pride to a symbol of sin and shamanism in light of Christian values. Similarly, the filmmaker Althea Arnaquq-Baril has stated,

> It has been said that Inuit underwent the most intense and rapid cultural changes of any *surviving* culture. While the First Nations and Metis (non-Inuit Native Americans) suffered as much or more than their arctic counterparts, their cultural changes took place over hundreds of years, whereas Canadian Inuit were colonized much later, and went 'from the ice age to the space age' in one generation. As a society, we are still reeling from the transition.
>
> (2012)

Through extensive research on the interactions between Inuit spirituality and Christianity, Laugrand and Oosten (2010) examine the multiplicity of ways that Inuit enacted their own agency and spiritual beliefs through the process of Christianization. They argue that Inuit culture did not go into decline in the face of colonialism, but instead underwent transformation that allowed Inuit to keep it alive in more covert ways. They posit that this attests to the "resilience of Inuit culture and its capacity to integrate external influences" (8). This provides a much-needed counter-narrative to the overplayed trope of Indigenous people and cultures as victims, instead of survivors, of colonial suppression. However, that does not negate the impacts of Christianization on Inuit culture. Multiple interview participants talked to me about colonial erasure of queerness through Christianization. Amanda stated,

> There's so much of Inuit culture that got buried, that got hidden, that had to be put away, so they probably only kept whatever traditions that were most important right then and there. . . . Especially when the Moravians were coming in going "okay, you're straight, you're with a man, and you're with a woman, and this is God and this is what happens", . . . why would they go "you know what, let me have a girlfriend", and make it worse on themselves during that time period?
>
> (Amanda Maggo Earle, personal interview, December 13, 2016)

However, the contemporary Inuit religious landscape is complex and varied. Because Christianization of the north was carried out by various sects of Christianity at different times by varying means, unpacking exactly what Christianity is to Inuit is by no means straightforward. Some Inuit identify strongly with Christianity and see it as a part of Inuit culture. In one notable example, when I asked Nancy about her interest in cultural revitalization, she responded,

> I do know some people, some young parents, who get their children baptized at the Moravian Church, so they'll grow up in that setting. I'm not baptized as Moravian, I wish I was, but I have went there for a few services and really enjoyed it.
>
> (Nancy Gear, personal interview, December 13, 2016)

Here I had not prompted her to talk about her relationship with the Moravian Church. It was apparent that she associated the Church with her Labrador Inuit identity. Furthermore, she felt that being baptized into the Moravian Church would constitute an aspect of cultural revitalization for her. For Nancy, and for some Labrador Inuit, revitalization of the Moravian Church is one way Inuit identity can be articulated and lived in a contemporary context. Regardless of historical circumstances that implemented and reinforced Moravian presence and the suppression of Inuit spirituality in Labrador, we cannot see Christianization as a flat, one-way process. Instead, it is necessary to understand that Inuit are agents of their own culture and that they have interacted with and built upon Moravian beliefs and practices. Anecdotally, in my visits to Labrador, I have met Inuit Moravian ministers, heard of Moravian sermons being delivered in Inuktitut, and heard the Inuit Moravian choir perform. In those and many other senses, the Moravian Church in Labrador has been converted into an Inuit institution.

However, there are many Inuit who reject the Church as a part of Inuit culture and view it as an aspect of ongoing colonization. Denise told me,

> There's a lot of Labrador Inuit who don't see things as I see them and that's okay. . . . They're very protective [of the Moravian Church], which blows my mind of a culture that did everything they could to eradicate you, and yet you see them as what saved you. Which was also very intentional in the whole process of colonization. . . . The first group that came through tried to destroy us. . . . I suppose seeing that wasn't going to work they took a different tactic, and the church was the tactic in my opinion. So to have people get so excited about the revitalization of the Moravian choirs, bands, blows my mind. Blows my mind. . . . I see so many people going "we're bring back pieces of our culture", and I go "no, these are pieces of our colonization". . . . I see how religion has devastated a lot of my life and my family and I can see the generational damage that's been done because of religion.

At the same time, Denise noted that she does have respect for fellow Inuit who have positive feelings towards the Moravian Church. She clarified that she makes a distinction between the Church and faith, stating,

> Reading [the Bible] made me understand stories, teachings. . . . Everything is a parable. Everything is a teaching. It's a story to teach another lesson, it's a story to tell a value, everything is used as sort of a metaphor, and when you talk about Indigenous spirituality, it's very much the same . . . so you find those common grounds. So I'm able to have very engaged conversations when I'm able to show people that I can respect Christianity, while I can be clear that I'm not necessarily a big fan of the Church, because I think the Church is a human construct and it's done a lot of damage. But spirituality, no matter where it resonates from, can still be pure, can still be clean, and can still have those ways of teaching things that just make sense.

Community cohesion

Brian Gilley states, "Before European contact, sexual and gender diversity was an everyday aspect of life among most Indigenous people" (2006: 7) and that this is a history well known to many Two-Spirit communities. However, he notes that many Two-Spirit people are forced to hide their gender and sexual identities within their own communities because they are at odds with contemporary constructs of Indigeneity (53). Through the interviews I conducted, and through current political discourse surrounding LGBTQ2S+ Inuit, I have found evidence of similar mechanisms at play within Inuit communities.

While there is a breadth of literature concerning the intersection of queerness and Indigeneity, this focus has rarely extended north. Several LGBTQ2S+ Inuit I interviewed remarked on the dearth of information regarding precolonial modes of gender and sexuality. Several interview participants expressed the desire for Inuit people to reclaim their forgotten histories. They are acutely aware that much has been lost through the process of colonization and that that could very plausibly extend to gender expression and identity as well as sexuality. However, these histories have been so well hidden that many queer Inuit feel a struggle inherent in their reclamation.

Many queer Inuit move away from their home communities and seek out more welcoming spaces, sometimes in bigger northern cities, but also often in larger southern urban centres. One of my interview participants, who chose to remain anonymous stated,

> I didn't know any gay guys growing up because all the gay men would move away. . . . Almost all gay men moved away. In Labrador people will go to Goose Bay because there's more people there.
>
> (Charlie*, personal interview, November 13, 2016)

Amarok* added,

> I find they still migrate towards—and I can't say for Nunatsiavut, but for Nunavik and Nunavut, a lot more gay Inuit in Iqaluit. And for Nunavik, and a lot more gay Inuit in Kujuak.
>
> (Amarok*, personal interview, November 13, 2016)

Denise left her community before she came out. While she cited a variety of reasons for leaving, she told me that she had been afraid to return due to a fear that she would not be accepted within her community:

> I was always terrified about coming back here. Especially the south coast community that I grew up in was very hostile, very religious.
>
> (Denise Cole, personal interview, December 13, 2016)

Some participants noted the ways in which they have seen acceptance grow within their communities in recent years. For example, Nancy told me about changes she was seeing in Labrador in LGBTQ2S+ acceptance:

> One of my friends who is from Nain . . . came out and received nothing but negative feedback from family and friends, but that was 20 years before I had done it. So there has been a huge difference, which is nice to see. . . . I have my clients that I work with at Supportive Housing. They're Inuit and they're all aware of my relationship and my orientation, and they are nothing but gracious about it. . . . They'll always say, "How's your girlfriend?" . . . you know, they just show interest, so I found that really nice, and I ask them, "Is the LGBT community common in your area, or was it when you lived there?" I actually asked them that when I first started working there, and they said they knew it was common but it wasn't—they knew people who were members of that community, but they weren't officially members of that community by stating it.
>
> (Nancy Gear, personal interview December 13, 2016)

Charlie*, who is also from Labrador, also talked fairly extensively about changing attitudes towards the LGBTQ2S+ community, noting that multiple people he knows have come out since he moved away, but adding that there are still people who remain closeted:

> I do have to say that attitudes back home towards gays and lesbians are changing. I went to Goose Bay Pride, not this past summer, because I was here, but the summer before that, and we had a really good turnout. Lots of Inuit were there and there was drum dancing. . . . There's more young gay Inuit men that are coming out than before, and staying in the communities. So when I go back it's not just me. It's myself, my cousin [redacted], his boyfriend [redacted], and they have a friend [redacted]

> and [redacted]'s boyfriend, who I don't remember, so there's a few and they're all living at home and they're out and everyone's okay with it. There's a lot of closeted cases too. There's a lot of that.
>
> (Charlie*, personal interview, November 13, 2016)

In doing this type of work, it is sometimes necessary to ask from where some of the major differences within communities or cultural groups are coming. During the interview process, I asked participants to what degree other Inuit, particularly friends and family members, were accepting of their gender or sexuality. Notably, some cited examples of family members who were less accepting of their queerness largely because they were survivors of residential schools and held to the colonial norms that were foisted upon them in childhood.

The film *Two Soft Things, Two Hard Things* (2016) highlights the contestation of queer identities in Inuit culture, pointing out that younger generations and some elders are accepting of LGBTQ2S+ identities while many people that fall within the middle generation are less accepting. This is largely due to the middle generation bearing the brunt of trauma associated with Christian-based residential schooling. The timing of Christianization in Labrador was slightly different than Iqualuit, where the film was shot, but the residential school system similarly impacted Labradormiut. Speaking about her coming-out process, an interview participant named Nancy noted that her late grandfather would not have been accepting of her sexuality had he been aware of it.

> I knew that would have been a challenge if he was alive. He was very closed minded and actually, he was sent to the residential schools when he was younger, so he had suffered a lot growing up. Very strong-headed man, but he was very set in his ways, so something that was out of the ordinary to him, he kind of shut it out.
>
> (Nancy Gear, personal interview, December 13, 2016)

Similarly, Denise spoke to me about the fear created through colonial practices that act as a barrier to LGBTQ2S+ acceptance, stating,

> The fear that was instilled, that our elders had to deal with a level of fear—you know, being taken away from your family, being beaten, being—all of those things that just create an intense level of fear. I always say, the number of elders we have that are probably undiagnosed with PTSD and . . . I'm sure it triggers their own fears for us. Understanding we're not going to get hurt now, for being ourselves.
>
> (Denise Cole, personal interview, December 13, 2016)

In this way, we need to be sensitive in our research to the colonial traumas and sexual violence experienced by many Inuit who are less accepting of

gender and sexual diversity while at the same time trying to get away from colonial notions of gender identity as the basis for our interpretations.

Amarok* spoke extensively about other ways in which colonialism may have hindered gender and sexual diversity, stating,

> I think before residential schools, that type of thing—before contact, or before Inuit were converted to Christianity, [being LGBTQ2S+] was a lot more accepted. Like, I know—there are still remnants of this belief that you let other do what they do. It's kind of this independent egalitarian system, where you let them do what they do, they let me do what I want to do, right? And one form of conflict resolution is if you don't get along with your neighbours, you just pick up and move. You're going to be moving anyways. So generally, families and friends would kind of camp together in the wintertime, or they would associate with each other if they got along with each other and shared the same values and stuff. That's how there got to be these diverse groups. That all changed when the settlements started happening, and there were a few famines, a few large famines, that kind of forced Inuit into these camps that were started up by churches and trading posts—and then the residential schools, so that kind of happened and then Inuit couldn't pick up and move as easily if they didn't get along with their neighbours.
>
> (Amarok*, personal interview, November 13, 2016)

Transgender and gender non-conforming Inuit

One thing that became apparent while identifying interview participants was that, while a fair number of Inuit are out as gay or Two-Spirit, very few are out as trans or gender non-conforming. Of my interview participants, the only two who spoke about trans experiences were Amanda, who had identified as trans before she discovered the term Two-Spirit, and Claudia*, the mother of a young trans boy who was still in the process of coming out in his community. While sexual diversity is in the process of becoming destigmatized, there are still very few people who are openly gender diverse or gender non-conforming. In many places, there is still little to no vocabulary for these phenomena. Gender diversity is still heavily stigmatized in large urban contexts, so the process of coming to terms with complex gender in smaller rural areas with less diversity is more complicated and often much slower. Claudia* told me that she would like concepts of gender diversity incorporated into everyday life, including concepts of the past:

> So that people would get more familiar with everything. So it would be more of the norm, so it wouldn't be an adjustment. I think that now, after we come out at the school, and as more parents find out and the community and stuff like that, I'm hoping that it's going to go over smoothly, but I could care less what anybody else thinks because we're

> kind of to ourselves anyway. I don't care what the town thinks, I've never cared what other people thought. But I do, I would like to know more about the Inuit side of the transgender, you know, back before churches took over, that type of thing.
>
> (Claudia*, personal interview, December 13, 2016)

Charlie* spoke a little bit about how he probably knew several trans or gender non-conforming people growing up in his Labrador community, but that the language was not there to express these identities at the time:

> There were some women growing up that, I would say, you know, they're older, some of them have passed on, but if they had been born nowadays, they would have identified as trans or we would have thought of them as trans, but just, we didn't have that language, it wasn't around then. It wasn't as accepted then. Because really, it's a small town, 400 people, everyone's your cousin, you know everybody, we're all kin, so everyone's like—and we're all living together and seeing each other day after days and years after year, so it becomes normalized. It's not necessarily accepted, but normalized.
>
> (Charlie*, personal interview, November 13, 2016)

Two of the women identified as Two-Spirit and both shared that they had questioned whether they should identify as trans in their younger years. While for Denise, it was confined to an inner dialogue about the possibility of identifying as a trans man, Amanda lived for several years as a trans man in Ontario. She recalled,

> When I was in Ottawa I went through a period, I would say . . . I was known as Adam when I was out there, so I did have a period of just trying to figure myself out I guess. I felt like I was too masculine to be a women, but after a while I figured out I'm more Two-Spirited, I guess you'd say. Because I felt too masculine to be a woman but too feminine to be a man.
>
> (Amanda Maggo Earle, personal interview, December 13, 2016)

For both, this way of identifying was not adequate. It did not articulate their identities in a way that felt satisfying. Both expressed that identifying simply as trans erased another part of their identities. When they encountered the concept of being Two-Spirit, it was much more fitting. Denise noted,

> Being able to connect to Two-Spirited philosophies allowed me to find a safe place amongst the queer community and a straight society where, you know, I didn't know where the hell I fit into all of that. . . . I live my life around Indigenous values, Indigenous spirituality, so when I couldn't find something within the Inuit culture that spoke to this,

> finding something within the Indigenous overall culture that I could connect to, it changed everything. And it's how I was able to be okay.
>
> (Denise Cole, personal interview, December 13, 2016)

For both, it was a way of encompassing all aspects of their gender identity and putting words to the feeling of embodying both masculine and feminine qualities. Denise emphasized that the term also expressed her Indigeneity and situated her gender identity in her cultural background:

> There's always been that conflict that I somehow wasn't woman enough, but still wasn't a man enough either, you know? So there was nowhere I really felt I fit. But having that, having that Indigenous lens, it allowed me to forgive a lot, and to embrace a lot and to finally find that balance. . . . It was beautiful to finally be able to let that go, that I somehow wasn't enough.
>
> (Denise Cole, personal interview, December 13, 2016)

It is notable that both felt a special connection to Two-Spiritedness and neither stuck with the term trans, nor the somewhat culturally nondescript terms nonbinary[1] or gender fluid. This emphasizes the need to provide the option to move away from white settler terms describing queerness. But although the term "Two-Spirit" fit for Denise and Amanda, others felt no connection to it since it originally emerged as a way to describe First Nations and Native American gender identity and sexuality.

> I like the idea of an Indigenous sexuality . . . but at the same time, do I as an Inuk from Labrador identify with the same term that a First Nations person in Nevada would use? I think it's trying to reach a bit too far for me.
>
> (Charlie*, personal interview, November 13, 2016)

To this, Amarok* responded, "I agree, I don't think Two-Spirit is an Inuit term I think it's a First Nations term" (Amarok*, personal interview, November 13, 2016). While both Charlie* and Amarok view Two-Spiritedness as a term separate from Inuit culture, Denise views it as a term that can encompass all queer Indigenous folks. She notes,

> There's no "you have to be part of this tribe", or "you have to be First Nations", . . . if you identify and see yourself as aboriginal and you're within the queer spectrum, then you have a home here.
>
> (Denise Cole, personal interview, December 13, 2016)

However, Denise also stated that Inuit customs and ceremony are rarely a part of Two-Spirit gatherings because, generally, very few Inuit are present at these events and less is known about queer Inuit cultural heritage. For

her, it is not a matter of coming up with a concept of queer identity that is separate from Two-Spiritedness but rather of hashing out where queer Inuit identity fits under the Two-Spirit umbrella. That said, she has faced challenges in exploring these issues, stating,

> I was talking to some of the older crew and they sort of say, "Well we didn't have a lot of these ceremonies, we were just sort of travelling and surviving, you know? Like, we've been the people to survive in one of the most remote and harshest places, we didn't have time to be making jingle dresses". But at the same time I don't believe it because I see how spiritually connected we are when we tap back into our culture and how we are with the land, and I like to believe that those ceremonies exist but we haven't reclaimed them yet, but I don't know how we do because so much of it has been lost.
>
> (Denise Cole, personal interview, December 13, 2016)

The tension that exists within the term "Two-Spirit", wherein on one hand it is a term that expresses the intersection between Indigeneity and specific modes of queerness, and, on the other hand, it may encourage cultural homogenization and pan-Indigeneity, poses a problem for self-identification within the LGBTQ2s Inuit community. Inuit are faced with a dilemma: is it preferable to identify with First Nations terms or white settler terms? While this decision can be contentious, the common thread is a need for a sense of queer identity that fits comfortably with cultural identity. Placing weight on queer Inuit history would represent a decided step in this direction. In developing a queer sense of past, social scientists might support LGBTQ2S+ Inuit in their development of community and identity in the present.

Suicide prevention

In the context of my interviews with LGBTQ2S+ Inuit, the theme of suicide came up repeatedly. Canadian Inuit have some of the highest rates of suicide in the world, with suicides among Inuit occurring at an average of ten times the rate of the rest of Canada (Bjerregaard et al. 2004; Boothroyd et al. 2001; Hicks and Bjerregaard 2006; Kral 2012; Navaneelan 2012; World Health Organization 2011). In my anecdotal experience, and according to Inuit I have spoken to on the matter, it is almost impossible to travel to an Inuit community and find someone who has not been touched, in some way, by suicide. There are obviously many factors contributing to these ongoing tragedies but many have pointed to colonialism as the root cause. Kral (2012) has discussed Inuit suicide as a specifically postcolonial phenomenon. He argues that intergenerational colonial traumas have kept rates of suicide high, despite interventions by federally employed psychiatric specialists tasked with creating suicide prevention programs in northern communities

since the 1990s (307). In 2001, the Assembly of First Nations touched on suicide rates among Two-Spirit people, stating,

> The solution [to discrimination] is to educate people [about] the traditionally respected role that Two-Spirit First Nations' peoples played in most communities and to thus remove the stigma that has been associated with this group.
>
> (National Aboriginal Health Organization 2012: 4)

Two-Spirit organization, research, and community-building have proven to be powerful tools for overcoming stigma and mitigating the risk of violence and self-harm among many Indigenous North American groups (National Aboriginal Health Organization 2012). The connection between suicide among Inuit and sexual and gender diversity has yet to be explored, but a number of studies have shown that Indigenous people who identify within the LGBTQ2S+ spectrum have higher suicide rates than their non-LGBTQ2S+ counterparts (Barney 2003; Paul et al. 2002; Taylor 2006: 38).

Multiple participants mentioned that they believe giving LGBTQ2S+ Inuit a sense of past and cultural value could aid in suicide prevention. One interviewee stated,

> Every generation has [queer folks], and to have the words and recognition, and say that hey you're not somehow isolated or separated from us before this and in fact there's a whole history of this . . . would be very helpful. This goes back to . . . suicide prevention in Inuit communities. There [are] high rates of suicide among trans and queer youth as well, and by trying to help reclaim sexuality and help reclaim gender, this can also help impact things like the suicide rate.
>
> (Charlie*, personal interview, November 13, 2016)

Claudia*, whose son is trans, has spent a lot of time thinking about her child's mental well-being. She had also considered the suicide rates among trans youth and believed that community support and a better sense of trans history would be helpful. She said,

> If they're not supported then the mental illness and the suicide rates skyrocket, so I wish people would be more supportive of it.
>
> (Claudia*, personal interview, December 13, 2016)

In her interview, Denise stressed the necessity of LGBTQ2S+ research to be carried out in Inuit communities, particularly in Labrador, expressing that clearly, not enough is known about the subject yet. She said,

> ITK,[2] their new suicide prevention for Inuit communities is very much about land-based healing work. The queer community can't get left

> out in that. You know, because it is, it's very much interconnected with culture and all of those things that came with colonization and with Christianity that told so many of us that, you know "you're very wrong. There's something very wrong with you". We have no real research in why people are dying by suicide at the levels they are right now, other than, you know, the thoughts around the colonization, the trauma, but how much of the trauma is connected around sexuality and gender? We have no idea. That question I would really love to be asked. The work needs to happen here. That's such a big part of what's going to help us not just reclaim, but to start answering some of the questions that people seem to be afraid to ask. We have some of the highest rates of suicide in Canada, if not the world. And I don't know how much of that—or if the question has ever been asked—if that's interconnected to LGBTQ themes or Two-Spirited themes.
>
> (Denise Cole, personal interview, December 13, 2016)

Imagining queer pasts

Although the tone of the interviews tended to be serious due to the coverage of heavy and deeply personal themes, including colonialism, suicide, and acceptance, parts of some interviews took on lighter tones and themes. Several participants made speculations about how queerness may have looked for their ancestors and, through this imagining, they demonstrated the need for archaeological and historical research that acknowledges and explores gender and sexual diversity. Although these parts of the interviews were largely hypothetical, when participants began to engage with LGBTQ2S+ narratives of the past, the mood lifted, and dialogue became lighter. During these parts of interviews, participants sometimes joked and laughed, enjoying the exercise of projecting aspects of their queer identities onto well-known iterations of past Inuit life. During their interview, Amanda and Regina joked with each other about how they envisioned a queer past:

> But think of it though. You've got a husband who's out on the trap lines for three or four months, and you've got three wives sitting there at home and they're with each other and they're comforting each other.
>
> (Amanda Maggo Earle, personal interview, December 13, 2016)

> It's like, did they ever have an experience or something?
>
> (Regina Maggo Earle, personal interview, December 13, 2016)

> They probably do! They're probably sitting there kissing each other and all that and it's not wrong! It's normal to them. Like, go be with your sister wife or something, you know! It's just funny when you go "oh my

> god, he had two wives, and they slept in a tent together, and anything could have happened".
>
> (Amanda Maggo Earle, personal interview, December 13, 2016)

> For all we know it could be man and woman, but when he's gone [his two wives] are meant to be together. And when he comes back he provides the food, helps you have a baby, then goes off again!
>
> (Regina Maggo Earle, personal interview, December 13, 2016)

> I can see that totally happening. Especially when you've got 20 women left on the island and ten men out to hunt somewhere.
>
> (Amanda Maggo Earle, personal interview, December 13, 2016)

> They were probably falling in love and everything else. Especially if it got cold at night and they got close, there's a lot of elements. So if you sit back and think about it, it's like "oh my god, that could have been there".
>
> (Amanda Maggo Earle, personal interview, December 13, 2016)

Although the tone of this exchange was light-hearted, watching the two women go back and forth about same-sex relationships among their ancestors suggested to me that uncovering queer pasts and affirming the time-depth of queer identities in Inuit culture has the potential to bring people a sense of connection, and to inspire joy. If ever archaeologists are concerned about the importance of our research to non-archaeologists, we should take note of the topics that make people happy, that people want to talk about and imagine together. In this way, decolonial archaeologies might benefit, at times, from focusing not just on the sombre realities of what has been taken away, but also on the rich narratives that can still be created.

Almost across the board, participants spoke about how an understanding of queer pasts in Inuit culture would be useful for LGBTQ2S+-identifying Inuit. Amarok* spoke about how narratives of the past that include sexual and gender diversity could have normalizing impacts on sexual and gender diversity in the present, stating:

> We've had words for gays and lesbians before Europeans came. Especially if we have words for that because we can construct words, but they're longer, you know, to describe new things. But our language—if we have actual words to use to describe that, that shows that that existed before—largely before European contact. . . . I think that for a lot of Inuit who are either questioning, they're curious, or they may be queer, anything other than just the binary—I think learning more about our history in terms of the nonbinary culture, the history that we had will give them a sense of belonging, I think, which I think is really

> needed. Give them a sense of belonging and give them some validity, like they're not evil, you know? That this was once normal, and maybe it can be normal again.
>
> (Amarok*, personal interview, November 13, 2016)

Nancy spoke about the importance of LGBTQ2S+ Inuit being able to connect to queer pasts that are culturally specific and relevant to them, stating,

> I feel like that's such a big deal. Because when someone is so in tune with their culture and their way of life and their ancestors and . . . if they've been told their entire life that "this has never happened with your ancestors", or this has never happened with anyone in their culture, it's nice to know that someone like you was even more just like you. That's the way I see it, I just feel like it's so nice to be able to link yourself to something or someone.
>
> (Nancy Gear, personal interview December 13, 2016)

Amanda also spoke about how it would have been helpful for her to have an Inuit concept of LGBTQ2S+ identity when she was younger and in the process of figuring out how she identifies.

> Something was missing and [I was] just trying to figure myself out in that sense like "okay, I do belong to part of a culture, I do belong to something", and if I had heard, you know "that's Two-Spirit, and this is what our culture believes", I bet it would have helped me understand my own sexuality more. . . . I would have truly loved knowing if that was actually in our culture, if there was something put out there like "be who you want to be", kind of thing, it would have been easier for me. Like, just understanding that it's okay to be that way.
>
> (Amanda Maggo Earle, personal interview, December 13, 2016)

Regina and Charlie* expressed similar sentiments, stating that they are hopeful that LGBTQ2S+-inclusive understandings of the past will emerge for the use and benefit of future generations. They said of gender and sexual diversity in the past:

> It could be nice if it would start coming out. From my generation probably to my daughter's generation or their children's children, it's likely to be introduced eventually.
>
> (Regina Maggo Earle, personal interview, December 13, 2016)

> I think that's—especially with a lot of younger Inuit, and young urban Inuit, who are curious to learn something about our history—I know I would like to learn more about it.
>
> (Charlie*, personal interview, November 13, 2016)

Conclusion

Interviews with LGBTQ2S+ Inuit allowed preliminary insights about how queering the past might contribute to LGBTQ2S+ and decolonization movements. Most of the participants drew connections between colonialism and the suppression of gender and sexual diversity in the past. Several used other aspects of Inuit culture that had been "lost" or forbidden and are now undergoing revitalization—such as drum dancing, throat singing, and tattooing—as analogies for the potential they see in revitalizing precontact concepts of gender and sexuality.

However, one complicating factor in conducting queer research in an Inuit context is the complexity and diversity of relationships that people have with religion and spirituality and how that relates to both their identities as Inuit and as LGBTQ2S+ people. In considering the often coercive Christianization of Inuit communities as a mechanism of colonization, it is tempting to frame total spiritual revitalization as a strategy for decolonization. If gender and sexual diversity do not fit within a Christian framework but fit into a precontact spiritual framework, then the liberation of diverse genders and sexualities must then rest on returning to those precontact structures.

However, this is an oversimplification that insists Inuit who embrace any circumstances that arose in relation to colonization and who are not insistent upon returning to a precolonial past are "inauthentic" in some way. This perpetuates the framing of Indigenous cultures as both static and archaic, the idea being that the only authentic versions of those cultures existed in the past and have now been wiped out or at the very least tainted by colonial processes. This perception robs colonial survivors of their agency and situates them in a liminal space wherein they are not fully assimilated, but have lost their sense of cultural identity. The end to this logic is the necessity that Indigenous people either eventually assimilate, thus completing the process of colonization.

Engaging with queer of colour theory, Munoz (1999) presents an effective way around this logic by introducing the concept of disidentification. He posits that, beyond assimilation into dominant settler culture and returning wholesale to a precolonial state through the rejection of all things associated with settler culture, disidentification represents a third option. It is neither assimilation into nor rejection of settler culture but rather a way of subverting these cultural logics from within that cultural landscape. If we adopt Munoz' notion of disidentification, the colonial subject is no longer expected to either assimilate or revert to a precontact state but rather to articulate their own identities and to build agencies within contemporary circumstances. The notion of disidentification bears particular pertinence to religious beliefs and practices. As Andrea Smith (2011) notes,

> Many Native peoples today *are* Christian, and yet they become positioned as necessarily inauthentic or "assimilated" even if they are concurrently involved in struggles for sovereignty and liberation. . . . We learned that decolonization projects can very quickly become colonial

> in their implementation. A disidentification strategy might have shifted our focus from expecting boarding-school survivors to adopt a particular traditional identity to providing a space by which their politicization could emerge from their actual multiple identifications.
>
> (54)

The importance of disidentification is emphasized through the stark differences in religious views in Inuit communities, even among the LGBTQ2S+ Inuit I interviewed for the purposes of this thesis. Some were harshly critical of Christianity and felt that a return to precontact Inuit spirituality would be beneficial. On the other hand, some identified as Christian and viewed this as a traditional aspect of Inuit culture.

Notes

1 I have used this term in the title of this thesis as a descriptor since there is no Inuit term for nonbinary gender of which I am currently aware. This might be problematic in that it is a culturally nonspecific term and does not speak specifically to Indigeneity, or to Inuit experiences of gender, but it is, nonetheless, the most accurate term that is currently available.
2 Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami or ITK is an organization for the national representation of Canadian Inuit.

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7 Gender complexity in archaeological materials

So far, I have focused on the importance of presenting queer narratives of the past through archaeological investigation. While the need for diversity and nuance in archaeological research is relatively uncontroversial, the means to get there pose greater challenges. Once it is established that gender and sexual diversity existed in the past (how could it not?) and that descendant communities, or groups within descendant communities, see this history as significant and holding the potential to positively influence their lived experiences and create a greater sense of connection with their ancestors, we are faced with the work of questioning our assumptions about the central component of archaeology: material culture.

Archaeology, it has been said, is a discipline of things. The objects that archaeologists study occupy a central role in our analysis and interpretations of cultural pasts. It has been argued that this emphasis on materiality and thingness is where archaeology gains its unique interpretive power, distinctive from anthropology and history (Olsen 2012). Archaeological objects can be interpreted in a great multitude of ways; things do not always scream out their meanings, nor are their meanings static or singular. On a theoretical basis, we tend to understand and recognize the concept that things are complex. They are points of convergence between culture and individual agency; they are extensions of human action; they inform and colour human experience; they hold different meanings when placed within different contexts.

However, no matter how many times we hear the idiomatic phrase "pots are not people", archaeologists have an enormous propensity to use the objects we uncover as direct proxies for social actors in the past. This problem is especially pervasive in the archaeology of gender, wherein artifacts are often assigned gender and used in a one-to-one relationship to reflect gendered people, their activities, and their movements in and around sites. This is very clearly a problem. We do not need to leave our own homes to understand that the things we use do not have such static and simplistic functions and meanings in human lives. And yet when we are seeking to formulate understandings of aspects of culture, lived experience, and identity, such as gender in the archaeological past, it seems we are stuck on the question of

how to move past this mode of artifact interpretation. The question becomes "if pots are not people, where can the people be found?" Unfortunately, much to the chagrin of archaeologists who want neat, universalized models and clean interpretive frameworks, there is a plethora of answers to this question, none of which are particularly straightforward.

One such answer—the one which formed the basis of my interpretations of archaeological materials presented in Chapter 8—is that people, past and present alike, cannot be found due to the fact that people are not and never have been static. Archaeologists cannot pin down a particular identity through the study of objects because objects interact with human experience in different ways, and these different levels of interaction reflect only glimmers of a whole person and their lived experience. When I embarked upon this research, it was my goal to do as archaeologists do and uncover something about the past. The thing I wanted to uncover was gender diversity. In my mind's eye, I was going to sift through all the evidence available to me until I found a positive diagnostic of nonbinary gender in the Inuit past. It was my understanding that if what much of the literature refers to as a *third gender* existed in the past, I could treat it as people have treated binary genders and identify objects and symbolism that correlate with this form of gender identity and expression. However, I quickly abandoned that endeavour as I realized my understanding of the breadth of identities that comprised the nonbinary genders outlined and referenced in anthropological literature. This realization, and an increasing engagement with the subject of gender in queer literature, also led to a realization that archaeological interpretation of gender has been deeply problematic.

And yet in order to incorporate diverse experiences into the past and, indeed, to understand the past at all, we must contend with the issue of how to read material remains. In approaching complex archaeological problems, such as the problem of incorporating understandings of nonbinary gender and gender complexity into our interpretations of the precontact Inuit past, we must consider how things were used, how they influenced those who used them, how things and social actors may have been mutually constituted, and which aspects of identity and social structure are written into the objects we find in the ground. We must also interpret artifacts on their own terms, examining their embeddedness in different aspects of human life, and their variable interactions with identities and social structures.

Over the course of this chapter and the next, I examine the materiality of gender complexity, complicating the notion that gender can be expressed in a singular or distinct way. This is not a systematic reframing (my apologies to those who read this in the hope of a new *model* for the archaeology of Inuit gender). Instead, these chapters present a chipping away and rebuilding of gendered meaning within select objects, demonstrating a methodology that allows for a deeper understanding of artifacts. My interpretations are based on an allowance for complex possibility, incorporation of storytelling and oral testimony, and objects that are multifaceted in their uses, meanings,

and significance. This does more to demonstrate what we might be missing than to tell future generations of archaeologists *how it was*.

In this chapter, I present my methodology and some of my thinking about how this work can be approached. In Chapter 8, I move on to specifically discuss the museum collections examined for the purposes of this research. This includes an exploration of several artifact types found in precontact Inuit contexts, examining their unique relationships to, and positionality within, a complex gender system. These materials include artifacts related to *angakkurniq*, bodily depictions and embodiment practices, and artifacts with readable gendered imagery, such as visual references to gendered body modification and the use of materials associated with gendered ideologies. While I primarily discuss archaeological materials from the sites of Brooman Point (QiLd-2), Skraeling Island (SfFk-4), and Qariaraqyuk (PaJs-2), I also incorporate references to the ethnological collection I examined in order to provide analogical support to my interpretations.

While these chapters do present an analysis of material culture, I re-emphasize that the point is not to create new diagnostic categories, nor is it to interpret material culture through a broad spectrum of time and space by applying the present findings directly to all Inuit archaeological collections.

Embedding objects in culturally specific contexts

In previous chapters, I have discussed the problems inherent in the use of artifacts as direct proxies for Inuit men and women: tools were frequently shared, gender roles were fluid and complex, and there is extensive anthropological evidence for nonbinary gender categories. One of the major barriers to understanding gender in complex and culturally meaningful ways is the simplistic appeal of static gender categories with sex-based ascriptions. Through an overreliance on naturalized concepts of biological sex for our understandings of gender, we perpetuate an illusion of objectivity in our work, while simultaneously reducing persons and agents to two-dimensional reflections of settler values.

Ian Hodder and Scott Hutson (2003) argue that material culture is meaningfully constituted and, therefore, cannot be subjected exclusively to empiricist analysis and interpretation, that agency—both the agency of people and of the artifacts themselves—needs to be factored into all archaeological interpretations and that archaeology should be more closely linked with history than the natural sciences (1–2). The notion of fluid or culturally variable gender does not fit into the framework of positivism since there is no natural science that can adequately tackle gender ontology. This constitutes a stumbling block for archaeology as a discipline. In many ways, the weight that archaeology carries in public discourse banks itself on a perception that archaeology is a scientific discipline. While it is true that archaeology often incorporates scientific concepts and methodologies, to look at it as a hard science in itself is reductive and inaccurate. Perhaps among the most

interesting things about archaeology is the sheer diversity in archaeological theories and methodologies. Part of the utility of archaeology is that archaeologists take up different methodologies and theories as needed to explore the past (and increasingly the present) from different angles. The information we seek to uncover informs the approaches we take. All of this is to say that archaeology is not monolithic in nature, by any means. Not only does this keep the discipline interesting for those of us who devote our lives to it, but it is a necessary quality for a field that seeks to explore something as complex and varied as the human narrative.

The question of gender aptly demonstrates a need to carry archaeology beyond empirical approaches into ideational realms, which impact, and are impacted by, material culture in complex ways that cannot be understood through functional categorization or statistical modelling. Furthermore, my research corroborates the authors' claim that the act of categorization creates and embeds meaning in our interpretations. Archaeologists who study gender with the presupposition that gender is a binary system that aligns with western notions of biological sex and that is cross-culturally similar reinforce those notions by positioning artifacts as material evidence for this simplistic structuring. By questioning these assumptions, we not only begin to reconstruct culturally nuanced narratives of gender but we also gain the ability to contribute to historically rich and varied narratives of gender and identity more generally.

The importance of looking beyond proxy approaches has been articulated in literature surrounding ethnicity in archaeology. Christopher Fennel (2000) problematizes the notion that objects alone can be diagnostic of ethnicity and instead argues that additional context, such as ethnography and folklore, is needed to understand these items due to similarities, overlap, and interaction between cultures and different meanings of the same objects inter- and intra-culturally. This perspective stresses the importance of looking at objects as dynamic and embedded within cultural systems and demonstrates that archaeologists must exercise caution when analysing archaeological materials since meaning and function are not static. These principles are also pertinent within the sphere of gender archaeology, wherein artifacts must be understood in terms of complex relationships and fluid cultural meanings, rather than as static forms of representation. Using contextual data is, therefore, integral to the interpretation of archaeological finds related to gender.

Furthermore, because I am attempting to reconstruct complexities in the Inuit gender system, which are defined largely by their fluidity, it does not make sense to look for diagnostic markers of fixed identities. Our interpretations of archaeological materials tend to rely on concepts of identity that are bounded and easily defined. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine an archaeology that wholly evades categorizations of identity, yet says something meaningful about how people lived and interacted in the past. But it is not my goal to evade the politics of identity wholly. Instead, my goal is to move towards an

archaeological practice that takes more seriously identities and social roles as they existed in the past and not how they exist in the white imaginaries of the present.

If we take all of this into account, it becomes clear that artifacts cannot be understood as proxies for human actors. The things that people create and use do not have static meaning, nor do they exist in a one-to-one relationship with individuals. Instead, the objects that we unearth are themselves actors in complex systems of meaning. We cannot possibly begin to disentangle those meanings if we do not take multiple approaches to understanding archaeological materials in their various contexts.

Gendered interactions with things

Judith Butler (1990) argues that genders cannot *be* but are rather *performed*. She states that there are no constant universal genders but rather that genders are constituted by their repeated performance and that, through this process, they gain credibility as forms of identity. However, Butler contends that there is no real identity behind these acts and that they do not express but rather wholly constitute gender.

In the context of this thesis, and in archaeology as a whole, the performative nature of gender might be a helpful concept. If gender were merely a static set of identities inherent within human biology, the materiality of those identities would be fairly straightforward. Archaeological sites would comprise artifacts and features that express actions, and those actions would be a projection of concrete identities. In this case, identifying diagnostic tools representative of different genders would be the logical course of action, and would likely prove to be very effective.

On the other hand, if we accept Butler's concept of performative gender, we must be more attentive to the multiple uses and meanings of different artifacts in different contexts, since materials might themselves be regarded as aspects of performance. In this sense, artifacts we might regard as "representing" gendered actors in the archaeological record might instead be regarded as components of gender or pieces of gender performance. Although this may be more complicated than tallying up diagnostic tools at a given site or mapping them onto households and landscapes to create static representations of gender distribution, we can choose to take a glass-half-full approach. Instead of having proxies for gender, we can hold in our hands component parts of gender and gender performance.

If we understand artifacts as aspects of gendered performance, we can more easily embed them within archaeological interpretations of complex gender categories. This means that we can more easily move past the naturalization of binary gender and onto understandings of gender that more closely reflect the ontologies of past cultures. It is far easier to "see" nonbinary genders if we accept that "seeing" binary gender is an illusion created by our naturalization of static binary categories.

Disentangling "ceremonial" objects

Because nonbinary genders in Inuit culture were often related to *angakkurniq*, I directed much of my attention towards artifacts plausibly related to *angakkurniq* and ceremonialism during my time at the Canadian Museum of History.

However, in re-examining objects related to Inuit ceremonialism, I have had to exercise caution. Archaeologists have been plagued by the tendency to interpret anything unusual or difficult to explain as being part of ritual activity. This has been so much of a problem in the past that many contemporary archaeologists clam up the moment the word "ritual" is uttered in any context. This seems to be somewhat of an over-correction, as understanding ceremonialism, cosmology, and supernatural thought are essential to understanding a culture more holistically. The problems with utilizing concepts of ceremonialism in our interpretations of the past are not inherent in ceremony or ritual itself but rather in the uncritical, uninformed, or culturally non-specific use of these concepts. Amy Gazin-Schwartz (2001) argues that everyday objects can have alternative ritual meanings and that, conversely, anomalous or unusual objects are not always related to ritual. She examines archaeological objects from seventeenth- to twentieth-century Scotland, demonstrating that folklore can be an important source for understanding the ritual meaning of everyday objects. Gazin-Schwartz articulates the need to consider the roles of ordinary objects in ceremonial practice. She also problematizes the tendency of archaeologists to classify oddities in the material record as evidence of ritual, stating that not everything that is anomalous is related to ritual and that ritual does not always produce anomalies since it is an aspect of everyday life. She also argues that the ritual meaning of an object is usually not inherently discernible.

It is for these reasons that I have tried to come to holistic understandings of artifacts in the collections I have examined. In my analysis, I have incorporated considerations of materiality, functionality, and connections to broader understandings of precontact Inuit culture. This has meant recognizing the multifarious meanings single artifacts can take on when placed in different contexts or used by different people, as will be evident in my discussion of anthropomorphic figurines. It has also involved disentangling some of the cosmological underpinnings of artifacts that are generally classed as functional.

In the fall of 2016, I travelled to the Canadian Museum of History (CMH) in Gatineau, Quebec, for one month in order to re-examine previously excavated archaeological materials. During this time, I examined three archaeological collections. I examined the materials in concert with catalogue information, paying assiduous attention to function, materiality, decoration, figurative representation, and visual references to folklore or cosmology. I was attentive to artifacts such as amulets, ornaments, miniatures, and drum frames, as well as any artifact bearing symbolism, figurative art, or more

abstract motifs. When I laid out the plan for this research, I believed I would be going to the CMH to find objects related to nonbinary gender. The idea was that artifacts plausibly related to shamanism might also hold clues about nonbinary gender, due to the close relationship between these identities as portrayed in anthropological literature on Inuit nonbinary gender. While this aspect of my research was fruitful, it did not unfold in the exact manner I had imagined. One of the most useful aspects of this investigation was that it allowed me to look at the ways in which settler assumptions about gender made their way into the interpretations of collections and artifacts. In addition, it allowed me to situate artifacts as complex and explore some of the possibilities that arise when we allow them to exceed their narrow functional categories.

The collections I studied were chosen based on a number of factors. The first reason was purely pragmatic and logistical: these collections were housed at the CMH in close proximity to each other. It was beyond the scope of my research (and my funding) to travel to multiple museums and the location of the Canadian Museum of History in a large, accessible, and relatively affordable city, as well as its extensive archaeological and ethnological collections made it the most viable location for my research. Second, the chosen collections represent large and well documented sites with rich artifact assemblages.

Then there is the presence of ceremonial structures called *qargis*. Conkey (1991) suggests that the examination of gender should begin at sites of gender performance and interaction. Because Inuit *angakkurniq* (shamanism) was often closely tied with nonbinary gender, and since ceremony often opened up mediatory spaces, sites with more space allocated for ceremonial and ritual performance might then be fruitful in the examination of gender complexity. Ethnographically, *qargis* have been widely documented throughout the Arctic (Birkett-Smith 1924: 135; Hawkes 1916: 59; Rasmussen 1929: 227). Although a few archaeologists recognized these features beginning in the late 1960s (Lutz 1973; Van Stone 1968), their identification did not become commonplace until the late 1970s, when McCartney identified a number of possible *qargis* based on their paved floors, lack of sleeping platforms, and artifact assemblages (McCartney 1977: 167, 1979: 288). Since then, multiple *qargis* have been identified based on symbolic attributes, such as whale bone construction, central pits, lack of sleeping platforms or kitchens, and unusual artifact assemblages (Habu & Savelle 1994; Patton 1996; Patton and Savelle 2006; Savelle 1997, 2002; Savelle and Habu 2004; Sheehan 1997).

It must be noted, however, that I did not focus solely on assemblages that came from ceremonial spaces since I do not believe that the performance of gender complexity was confined to a specific space or set of spaces within precontact Inuit sites. Furthermore, not all of the objects I examined bore any relation to ceremonialism. I used multiple classes of materials and approached gender complexity from a variety of angles, which made

non-ceremonial spaces and objects significant as well. It is also important to recognize that ceremonial objects and spaces cannot so easily be truncated from everyday objects and spaces.

The final reason I selected these sites was that they are all large, spatially and temporally similar precontact winter sites, and that they are extensively documented, making for easier comparison. Although my background research has included information from throughout the Arctic, it has demonstrated that gender complexity varied between Inuit cultures and across time and space. As such, I chose to begin with a slightly more localized approach. That said, my analysis is still coarse-grained. As research into precontact Inuit gender complexity progresses, as with any research about precontact Inuit culture, we should begin to hash out the distinctiveness of Inuit cultures throughout time and space, understanding how specific groups viewed gender and the world around them.

The collections

The first collection I examined came from Brooman Point (QiLd-1) on Bathurst Island, Nunavut. This site was originally noted during a regional aerial game survey and, in 1961, was photographed by W. E. Taylor Jr. (McGhee 1984: 2). Robert McGhee surveyed the site over the course of five days in 1976 and later returned to conduct excavations over two six-week periods in the summers of 1979 and 1980 (McGhee 1984: 2), focusing primarily on the precontact Inuit occupation. McGhee is vague about his specific methods of survey and excavation.

The Brooman Point site contains 20 winter houses, not all of which were occupied contemporaneously (McGhee 1984: 77; Park 1997). Both Dorset and precontact Inuit materials are present at the site. This site differs from the others in that McGhee has not identified any ceremonial structures, but because the original excavations and analysis occurred before much was known about precontact Inuit sites, a re-evaluation of the site records could yield useful insights about the nature of the site's various structures, including any that might be identifiable as *qargis*. The artifact assemblage includes a diverse body of ritual and figurative artifacts, including drum frames, beads, pendants, animal effigies, and ivory and wooden dolls, some bearing unusual decorations and cut marks (McGhee 1984: 73–74).

The second collection I looked at comes from the Skraeling Island site (SfFk-4), located on the Bache Peninsula, Ellesmere Island, Nunavut. The region was originally surveyed by Peter Schleddermann (1977), and 33 archaeological sites spanning from 4000 BP to the contact period were identified. Among these was the winter village site of Skraeling Island, which was further surveyed by zodiac and helicopter and excavations carried out from 1977–1983, during which period it was identified as a Ruin Island Phase site, dating from roughly 900–800 BP (McCullough 1993: iii). This site contains 23 winter houses, all of which have been at least partly excavated

(ibid.). Among these, McCullough has identified houses 4, 8, 13, and 18 as potential communal or ritual houses on the basis that they all lack sleeping platforms and kitchens (22–69). The artifact assemblage is also extensive, containing beads, amulets, drum frames, figurines, and ornaments.

The third collection comes from the site of Qariaraqyuk (PaJs-2), located on southeastern Somerset Island, Nunavut. Peak occupation of the site occurred from 600–800 BP and it is estimated to have been home to up to 350 people at certain times throughout this occupation (Whitridge 1999: 1). Qariaraqyuk was identified by Douglas Savile (1959: 1968), who noted its many precontact Inuit housing structures and was subsequently surveyed aerially by Allen McCartney in 1975 (McCartney 1979) and on foot by James Savelle, who identified 51 houses at the site in 1980 (Savelle 1989).

In 1992, Qariaraqyuk was non-intrusively surveyed by Peter Whitridge. Topographic maps were created and the locations of visible features and artifacts were recorded, while significant cultural features were photographed, and each house depression was sketch-mapped (Whitridge 1999: 145). Through this process, 59 houses were identified (Whitridge 1999: 151) and subsequently statistically clustered into 6 types plus an additional category for potential *qargis* (Whitridge 1999: 153).

In the summer of 1993, Houses 35, 38 and 41, as well as a midden area adjacent to House 41, were partially excavated. The subsequent year, House 41 was completed and Houses 29, 33, and 34 were excavated (Whitridge 1999: 157). All of the houses were mapped and excavated using a 1-metre string grid. Every 2 metres, a 20-centimetre baulk was left for the recording of stratigraphy. I selected this site for study due to its large size, presence of ritual artifacts, and Whitridge's suggestion that House 41 represents a *qargi* (198).

Materials

At the museum, I first went through the paper catalogues to gain a sense of familiarity with the materials I would be working with. I also took some notes about artifacts that seemed like they might be relevant to my research. Next, I went through the trays one by one, noting the contents of each, selecting artifacts that fit the criteria of what I was looking for (discussed in detail next). When I selected an artifact, I found its catalogue entry, copied the catalogue information to my own spreadsheet, and added my own notes and observations. I also photographed these artifacts for later reference and inserted these photographs into the spreadsheet. This process took two to three days for each collection. Next, I revisited my spreadsheet and identified objects that I wanted to illustrate, photograph more clearly, or research further. I spent the remainder of my time completing these tasks.

Although I looked through all of the trays of materials available to me, I focused most of my attention on specific types of materials. The first category of material culture I examined in detail included anything that might

have had any direct relationship with *angakkurniq*, mostly things like amulets, figurines, and drum frames. I included this in my analysis, despite having shifted the main focus of my research away from *angakkuit*, because even if *angakkuit* were no longer set at the centre of my investigation, they still comprised a category of social actors with complex identities who, in many instances, fell outside of or between binary gender categories. Therefore, their material culture and anything they might have produced, such as amulets, is still an area that merits investigation.

The second category of material culture was anything that bore any representation of human or animal bodies, including figurines and aspects of implements that had been designed to resemble bodies. The reason for this is that bodies often act as the physical nexus of identity and also of ways of identifying both human and animal actors. Bodily representation is directly tied to culturally specific concepts of personhood, including aspects such as gender expression and differentiation (this is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5). I have included animal figurines in this part of my analysis because animals were social actors within Inuit culture and were often not fully differentiated from humans. It is, therefore, potentially useful to try to understand various kinds of bodily representations including the multiplicity of Inuit social actors in order to reach an understanding of bodily representation and embodiment.

I also included in my analysis any artifact that bore geometric design, since many of the motifs found on precontact artifacts are reminiscent of traditional Inuit tattoo motifs, many of which had gendered meaning, and might, therefore, be able to tell us something about ties between artifacts, bodies, and the Inuit worldview.

In addition, I spent my last few days at the CMH examining a variety of materials related to *angakkurniq* from the museum's ethnology collection. I arranged this aspect of my research when I still intended to centre my work on *angakkuit* and materials related to *angakkurniq* that could plausibly contain clues about how nonbinary gender might be expressed in a shamanic context.

In a recent paper, I discussed some potential avenues that archaeologists might take to exploring nonbinary gender materially in precontact Inuit contexts (Walley 2018). The purpose of the paper was to lay out some potential approaches that have thus far gone untested. These approaches include looking at the mixing and amalgamation of gendered symbolism in material culture and explorations of ritual spaces that might have acted as sites for gender mediation. This research gave me the opportunity to incorporate some of these approaches into my examination of museum collections. These approaches will be outline in detail in Chapter 8.

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8 A study of artifacts from three Inuit archaeological sites

In the previous chapter, I outlined my methodology for re-examining museum collections and discussed the importance of conceiving of artifacts as complex and allowing for the possibility that they held multiple meanings at different times to different people. In this chapter, I provide examples of the different ways in which I interpreted these artifacts. First I discuss figurines as an avenue for exploring relationships between concepts of embodied physicality, personhood, and gender identity. I will then explore the potential to look at artifacts that incorporate hybridity of gendered elements, and how gendered features such as materials with known associations with gender, gendered motifs seen in tattoo design, and symbolism related to gendered themes in mythology and folklore might be combined to communicate more complex gendered meanings. Polar bears will factor heavily into this discussion, due to proposed associations between polar bears and mediation (Trott 2006). I will then move on to discuss *tapshi*, or *angakkuit*'s belts, and the use of adornment in acts of mediation. Through discussion of these distinct materials, I hope to demonstrate the complexity of relationships between people, bodies, cosmology, storytelling, and identity, and the multifaceted ways artifacts articulate with cultural expressions of gender. First and foremost, I hope to open up space to question the assumptions we tend to make about artifacts as they are excavated, catalogued, and presented to the public.

Human figurines were abundant within all three of the archaeological collections I examined. These artifacts were generally small, averaging about five centimetres in length, and were made of wood or ivory. Figurines are interesting sources of information when it comes to gender, largely because they often have the power to tease out tensions between identity and personhood on one hand, and concepts of the physical bodies of individuals, on the other. If we consider Butler's (1990, 1993) assertion that gender is performative and that bodies gain meaning through gendered constructs, actual depictions of bodies might articulate sexed and gendered meanings as they existed in the past. Biological bodies are understood in different ways by different cultures and gender is often constructed in relation to biology.

Figurines may provide a way to look at how bodies were understood, and what aspects of bodies were the most significant. Figurines are also compelling for their multiplicity of meanings within precontact Inuit culture.

Figurines were used as stand-ins for people, both living and dead, within Inuit communities. For many Inuit cultures, the soul (*tarnina or inuusia*) was conceived of as a miniature version of oneself suspended within a bubble of air located around the groin (Laugrand and Oosten 2008). Therefore, human figurines of wood or ivory often acted as a material manifestation of a person. Similarly, if a miniature version of an artifact belonging to a person was placed in a burial context, the original could be retained by living relatives or friends, since the essence of the object remained alongside its rightful owner in the form of the miniature. This is based on a belief that miniature objects could be enlarged for use in the afterlife and that human figurines were the part of an individual that entered into the afterlife (Jenness 1970: 176).

Related to their function as proxies for or aspects of living people, figurines were sometimes employed in medical practice. For example, Karen Ryan and Janet Young (2013) examined a wooden human figurine recovered from a Sadlermiut Grave from Native Point, Southampton Island, Nunavut, arguing that it was an *aarnguaq* (powerful or magical object) that was used by an *angakuq* for healing purposes. Their argument is based on a number of perforations made on the figurine that corresponded closely with skeletal abnormalities present on an associated individual. Based on ethnographic evidence, they argue that these perforations were made in order to heal the individual of an illness, which is consistent with the notion that miniatures often acted as stand-ins for real people, both living and dead, for a variety of purposes.

The nonbinary nature of the Inuit gender system as expressed through the role of the *angakuq* might also be tied to the role of medical practice within shamanic tradition. *Angakkuit* often acted as medical practitioners or healers in Inuit communities prior to European contact. A prevalent aspect of many shamanic rituals was the traversing of the boundaries between human and spirit realms. For example, if a member of the community fell ill, it might be attributed to their transgression of a taboo that angered a deity, usually Nuliajuk (the sea woman) (Laugrand and Oosten 2014: 31). It was then the job of the *angakuq* to enter a spirit realm to make amends with the spirits.

In contrast to many other medical or healing traditions, western biomedicine is based in biological reductionism, or the concept that a person can be regarded as a concrete biological body (Benoist and Cathebras 1993). Medical treatments are therefore administered to target physical causes and symptoms of any given ailment. The western biomedical tradition also engages in the narrative of binary gender through emphasis on physical sexual characteristics as a prominent aspect of personhood. The concrete "facts" of the human body divide most people into the dually opposed categories of

male and *female*. Concurrently, we tend to think of sex as biological and gender as social. In other words, sex is physical and therefore biologically factual, while gender is socially constructed. As discussed in Chapter 2, the construction of biological bodies and understandings of sex are also rooted in the social.

Through these figurines, we see medical practices that are tied to gender complexity through their relationship with *angakkurniq*, with *angkkuit*, who mediated between disparate realms in order to cure or prevent illness, as medical practitioners. In this type of medical practice, primacy was placed on fluidity and multiplicity, and the source of illness or wellness transcended the individual, instead taking on social and cosmological meaning. These medical practices do not claim to be rooted exclusively in the physical body but dealt with a more complex concept of personhood, one that took into account various relationships between the physical person, spirits, and deities. These practices, as are sometimes articulated through figurines, and other times conveyed through the presence of shamanic objects, do not rest upon the same biological reductionism as western medical practice, suggesting differences in the ways biological bodies were conceived of in the Inuit past.

Human figurines were often created or used by children as dolls (Laugrand and Oosten 2008; Strickler and Alookee 1988). Play can be a powerful way for children to learn. With toys and games, children develop their cognition, their motor skills, and they learn to perform tasks that will be useful during their adult years (Rommes et al. 2011). Games and toys can also teach children about social norms, and particular modes of being and interacting with the world as gendered people (Hardenberg 2010; Joyce 2000; Kenyon and Arnold 1985; Park 1998; Rommes et al. 2011). Rosemary Joyce (2000) discusses the importance of toys in shaping children's genders and identities, noting that the use of artifacts with gendered meaning does not automatically transform the children into fully gendered individuals but that it takes repeated use of these objects for gender identity to form over time.

Inuit children are associated with a variety of games and toys, many of which were miniatures of gendered objects (Laugrand and Oosten 2008). Ethnographic accounts of early contact period Inuit children describe imitative play among Inuit children such as playing with dolls, play-hunting, and so on, that involved the use of miniatures (Kenyon and Arnold 1985; Laugrand and Oosten 2008; Park 1998; Strickler and Alookee 1988). In addition, small structures, often echoing the structure of a larger winter house, with brightly coloured pebbled and stones, and interpreted as playhouses, have been identified at multiple sites in Greenland, (Hardenberg 2010). Construction of these houses was also recorded ethnographically among the Copper Inuit of northern Canada (ibid.). Hardenburg concludes that these houses were instrumental in transmitting and reinforcing cultural practices. Similarly, figurines were likely heavily implicated in the passing down of understandings of body and personhood. Children playing with

these toys likely learned about themselves and projected their own personhood onto the wooden and ivory figures. When we look at children's toys, we tend to undervalue them as mere sources of entertainment, viewing play as frivolous or tangential to culture, when in fact, they are powerful sites of cultural transmission. It is, therefore, useful to conceptualize toys not only as teaching devices for children in the past, but also as teaching devices for archaeologists who hope to glean deeper understandings of past ontologies and cultural practices from the material record.

In figurines, we see a tying together of aspects of embodiment, personhood, cosmology, medical practice, and play within a single type of object. Figurines were not divided into these categories; each figurine could fill one or all of these functions. The fluidity of these objects, as well as the multiple meanings attached to them, attests to the difficulty of distilling artifacts into functional categories or as proxies for single activities. It is, therefore, essential that we explore possible meanings and uses of objects, both common and anomalous, over multiple contexts.

In an examination of European Neolithic human figurines, Douglass Bailey (2007) questions common assumptions about the sexed and gendered nature of these figurines, arguing that "figurine agency is completely detached from any original intention" (246) and that many of that narratives we have surrounding these corporeal representations actively construct gender in the present, rather than reflecting gender in the past.

Bailey points out that we stereotype these objects as being predominantly female, while some have male attributes and others exhibit both male and female body parts (Bailey 2007: 246). The majority, however, lack sexual attributes altogether (Bailey 2007: 247). This demonstrates a tendency for archaeologists and publics to look for familiar constructs where those constructs may not actually exist.

Throughout the catalogues for the Brooman Point (QiLd-2), Skraeling Island (SfFk-4), and Qariaraqyuk (PaJs-2) collections, most figurines were given a sex attribution. However, during my examination of these artifacts, I noted most were sexually ambiguous and that the sexed meaning of these objects seems to be a projection of the cataloguer's cultural understanding of sexed bodies, possibly due to the emphasis we tend to place on sex in the formulation of identity. The form of some of these figurines might actually indicate that the formulation of gender identity may have had less of a concrete basis in binary sex than we tend to assume. While some figurines do exhibit potential indicators of sex, such as pronounced buttocks and hips or small breasts, others are devoid of any sexual characteristics. These characteristics are also not pronounced enough to be outside of the range of variation for any sex, and cannot therefore be interpreted as concrete depictions of sexed bodies.

Bailey's argument that "the very categories that are being defined and sought in standard assessments of a figurine are themselves unstable" (2007: 248), or that categories of male and female are mutable and subject

to variation over time, space, and between cultures, is aptly applied to the collections I have examined.

The archaeologists who originally created the catalogues for these collections evidently prioritized western, biologically informed concepts of sex as fundamental for describing the figurines (little descriptive space is afforded to cataloguers so information surrounding each artifact must *necessarily* be stripped down to its fundaments). Undoubtedly, the cataloguers believed they were conveying simple, objective knowledge regarding these items, but instead, they wrote cultural meaning into the figurines, cultural meaning that has emerged in the field station, lab space, or museum work bench occupied by the cataloguer. Similar to the Neolithic corporeal depictions cited by Bailey, through the researcher's gaze, these figurines have become agents that construct sex in the present instead of conduits of information about the construction of personhood in the past.

Here I want to be cautious; it is not my intention to imply that the lack of sexual characteristics in human figurines implies a total lack of interest in these features. I also do not wish to imply that all figurines are devoid of markers of sex or gender; some have breasts, and figurines in precontact collections often depict elements of gendered clothing (Peter Whitridge, personal communication, May 24, 2017). Furthermore, ethnographic literature points to the importance of dolls in teaching children, primarily girls, the skills that they would use as women (Strickler and Alookee 1988). Nor is it my intention to question that there were differentiated concepts of masculinity and femininity in precontact Inuit cultures. I merely wish to draw attention to the spaces left between these roles. In addition, I advocate that, in order for us to develop a more fully fleshed-out archaeology of gender, we must investigate the concreteness or fluidity of connections between gender roles, identity, and biological bodies. While dolls were directly tied to the development of Inuit femininity (Strickler and Alookee 1988), we cannot make the assumption that femininity was taken on exclusively by people with biologically female bodies. While there is much to be said about the multiple meanings of Inuit figurines, we must be cautious not to overstep and apply labels like "male" and "female" without any real evidence.

Where the makers of figurines chose not to depict male-ness or female-ness in a clear-cut way, but instead a more generalized corporeality, we should not make an attempt to gender them. While archaeologists have decided that one of the most basic ways to understand these objects is to assign them sex, the objects themselves seem to communicate that that was not the most significant information to convey through anthropomorphic depictions. This suggests to me that we should be more conservative with our assumptions about how bodies were understood in the past, especially considering Butler's assertion that there is no "pre-discursive" sex (1990: 9), but that is it constructed, performed, and negotiated within its own cultural context. Do figurines point directly towards fluid concepts of sex and gender? Perhaps

not. But what they do communicate is just as important: corporeal forms have served as a powerful site for naturalizing or homogenizing narratives, and we must become more cognisant of the assumptions we bring to interpretations such as these.

Gendered materiality and symbolism

In 1977, Robert McGhee examined gendered symbolism embedded in precontact Inuit artifacts. He argued that there were symbolic associations between women, ivory, and the sea on one hand and men, antler, and land on the other. McGhee's approach is based in an understanding of taboos surrounding the mixing of things from the land and the sea, and their gendered associations that are fairly well-documented ethnographically (Mauss 1979) but also relies on a sharp and simplified dichotomy between men and women in Inuit culture that does not seem to take some of the intricacies of the gender system into account. While McGhee's work might have presented a somewhat reductive version of gender dynamics present in the Inuit archaeological record, he also pointed to the possibility that we might be able to understand gender as it is written into artifacts beyond the functional categories of men's and women's tools. In his approach, McGhee provides a starting point from which we might form associations between objects, materials, ideology, and gender by suggesting that gender ideologies might be written, albeit in complex ways, into archaeological materials.

Hodder and Hutson (2003) advocate a contextual approach, in which overlapping types of meaning are taken into account: physical, functional, economic meaning; meaning in relation to broad structures that are historically situated; and meaning produced by individuals, who are seen as embodied agents with unique lived experiences (1–2). Instead of focusing on artifacts as having singular gendered meaning or seeing them as stand-ins for gendered people, archaeologists might be able to form nuanced understandings of gender through a multifaceted approach to materiality, wherein we take into account the multiple aspects of objects with composite meanings and weave them back into our interpretations of the object as a whole. This investigation can begin at sites of gendered meaning.

Hybridity of gendered attributes

If we consider McGhee's hypothesis, one compelling direction to take might be the examination of those objects that fall outside of this dichotomous patterning. Among the ethnographically recorded manifestations of nonbinary gender outlined in Chapter 1, several examples included hybrid forms of identity, which incorporated both masculine and feminine attributes. Although artifacts cannot be understood in a one-to-one relationship with people or personal identity (a point I expect I have hammered home by now), we do see some of this hybridity come through in material culture,

which is especially clear in the admixture of gendered clothing elements (e.g. Saladin d'Anglure 1994: 92, 94).

Indeed, an ethnographic consideration of clothing might provide a useful starting point for the examination of nonbinary gender in the archaeological record, since there is a rich ethnographic record around gendered clothing, and since embodiment practices, such as one's manner of dress, can convey a variety of meanings surrounding the wearer's identity and positionality within society.

Taylor (1974) notes that, in Netsilik Inuit culture, men's and boy's clothing was similar, with boy's coats being smaller versions of their adult counterparts' clothing (22). Similarities in adults' and children's clothing can be seen as an aspect of gender performance; practices that reflect or mimic adult embodiment, social roles, or activities are often used to usher children into their future roles in society (Joyce 2000). In the Inuit case, the dressing of children as smaller adults points to the fact that children probably began to take on aspects of adulthood, including gender roles, from a young age. In addition to clothing, children often played with toys that were miniature versions of adult's tools and implements (Anawak 1994: 46). It is often difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between children's toys and miniatures used in other practices (such as ritual replacement of tools in burial contexts) because the same objects were sometimes used in both cases (Laugrand and Oosten 2008). Jack Anawak states,

> Girls are provided with packing parkas, called *amoutis*, and carry their dolls on their backs as they will carry their children in the future . . . [while] boys are dealt with from an early age as budding hunters, and are introduced to traditional games, group play and exercises to learn agility, improvisation, and endurance.
>
> (1994: 46)

Some scholars (Crass 2001: 109; Hall et al. 1995: 52) have noted that clothing belonging to *angakkuit* and worn during ceremony generally mixed gendered elements of clothing. One explanation of this comes from a story told by an *angakuq* from Iglulik and recorded by Franz Boas (1901: 157). One day, the *angakuq* was out hunting caribou. He killed three, then the next day, he saw four large bucks. As he hit the largest of them with an arrow, its skin and antlers fell away and it shrank, becoming a woman wearing fine clothing. She gave birth to a human child, and then died. By now the other caribou had turned into humans and began to cover the woman and her child with moss. They told the *angakuq* to go tell his people what had happened and then have his own clothing made to look like the woman's clothing. This is how the *angakuq* gained his powers.

This story suggests a connection between gender fluidity, human-animal fluidity, and shamanic power. Through his interaction with the woman, who was able to transform from a male animal to a reproductively female

human, the *angakuq* acquired powers that were solidified when he adopted her clothing style.

Clothing usually combined multiple types of materials, so while intact clothing is usually not archaeologically recoverable, some aspects of clothing might be found. In his examination of an early twentieth century Netsilik Inuit collection, which includes 46 men's and older boys' coats, Taylor (1974: 25–29) notes the presence of ornamentation and toggles made of hide, different coloured fur, sinew, antler, musk-ox horn, and wood (27). Taylor (1974: 29) describes an *angakuq*'s coat as being "highly decorated", with weasel skins, beads, and a safety pin on the front, with a weasel skin and amulet belt attached to the back (30). Other articles of clothing have beaded additions (28), all of which might show up in the archaeological record.

While it might not be realistic to look for clothing as evidence of gender mixing and fluidity, the example of the *angakuq*'s coat might provide insight on how we might begin to understand complex gender in the Inuit archaeological record. The mixing of gendered elements in the context of shamanic clothing suggests that there is a material culture of mediation, including gender mediation.

Gendered significance of tattoo motifs

Many ethnographers have touched on the ubiquity and variety of Inuit tattooing. Based on this literature, tattoos were mostly worn by women, while the prevalent form of body modification among men included labrets (Gritton 1988; Spencer 1959: 242). Women's tattoos generally covered their faces, breasts, hands, arms, and thighs and ranged widely in design and application (Carillo 2014: 13). When men had tattoos, they are usually described as more minimal and sometimes pictorial, consisting of simplified human and animal figures (Mathiassen 1928: 200). Some scholars have alternatively suggested that both Inuit men and women could have been elaborately tattooed, but that European concepts of masculinity and femininity very quickly wiped out male tattooing related to beautification (Kapel et al. 1991: 110). This seems unlikely, due to the existence of tattoos styles that are associated with masculinity and femininity, respectively. However, there is little information to indicate whether there was ever a mixing of tattoo styles and whether masculine tattoos were ever applied to female bodies and vice versa.

In Therkel Mathiassen's *Material Culture of the Iglulik Eskimo* published as an ethnographic volume comprising one aspect of the *Report of the Fifth Thule Expedition 1921–24*, the Danish anthropologist discusses tattooing practices observed over the territory of Iglulik Inuit in the northern Baffin region of the Eastern Arctic. He describes multiple facial tattoos: *qaujaq* (forehead lines), *tunit* (cheek lines), *eqerutit* (designs by the mouth), and *tablerutit* (chin lines), as well as lines and geometric patterns seen on women's hands, forearms, and thighs (Mathiassen 1928: 199). One of the most

commonly documented women's tattoos is a double-V design centred on the forehead.

Several sources (Boas 1964: 179; Gaul n.d.; Victor-Howe 1994: 179) have noted that practitioners of this art form were generally older women, due to their expertise sewing hides. In Boas' accounts, the artist does not sew the skin, but rather pricks it repeatedly with a needle and then smears pigment into the wound, suggesting that the position of older women as tattoo artists has a significance beyond their acquired skill with needle and sinew. He also connects women's facial tattoos to menstruation, which suggests an interesting relationship between old and young women that is articulated through embodiment practices.

Among some groups, the ability of a woman to withstand the pain of tattooing demonstrated her preparation for the pain of childbirth (Carillo 2014: 14). Tattoos on women's thighs have also been connected with childbirth, providing newborns with beautiful imagery to look at as they entered the world (Gaul n.d.).

All of this evidence suggests that tattooing had intrinsic ties to Inuit femininity and that that was frequently linked to female-ness. Of course, it is almost impossible to say whether feminine tattoos were always applied to female bodies; ethnographic reports of gender fluidity and role-swapping suggest that clothing was not worn with strict adherence to sex-based gender categories, and it seems likely that this could have included other embodiment practices like tattooing.

Notably, tattoo motifs, particularly tattoo motifs that are ethnographically affiliated with femininity, tend to show up as decorative elements of artifacts. These artifacts are often functional and hold gendered connotations themselves. The links between certain kinds of tattoos and femininity might therefore allow us to consider the complexity of gendered themes as they were written into archaeological finds.

Polar bears as gender mediators

Christopher Trott (2006) has argued that polar bears were a symbol of gender mediation as well as shamanism in Inuit culture, because they are associated with a variety of men's and women's activities. Furthermore, Trott points out that polar bears hunt on the sea ice and are often encountered in water but are also able to travel overland. This positions them in an ambiguous category (91). This is of particular significance considering the conceptual separation between land and sea in Inuit ontology, and the taboos that separate land activities and products from sea activities and products (Mauss 1979; McGhee 1977).

Polar bears are also implicated in stories about powerful beings in the Inuit world. For example, Sedna, the mother of sea mammals, sleeps on a platform at the bottom of the sea, and it is said to be guarded by polar bears (Trott 2006: 93). Furthermore, in order for Sedna's father to visit her at the

bottom of the sea, he must wrap himself in a polar bear skin (ibid.). This demonstrates the mediatory power of the bear. Another figure in Inuit cosmology who is associated with polar bears is the Man on the Moon, Igaluk (also known as Aningat). Like Sedna, Igaluk's sleeping platform is guarded by polar bears. Additionally, his *komatik* (sled) is pulled by polar bears.

Many of the artifacts I examined incorporated polar bear imagery into their forms. An interesting example of an artifact with complex gender-coding is an ivory polar bear effigy, which is likely a fragment of an ivory seal drag handle, found at Qariarqyuk. Here, the polar bear, which holds conceptual ties to *angakkurniq* and gender mediation, is used as the form of an implement used in the act of sealing, an act that was primarily carried out by men. From this information alone, we are able to say that the object's embedded meaning goes beyond mere functionality and incorporates aspects of Inuit worldviews into its form. Building upon that, if we accept McGhee's hypothesis about the symbolic associations between ivory and women, the materiality of the object itself can be associated with Inuit concepts of femininity.

Additionally, there is a V-shaped motif inscribed onto the surface of the object. This motif is among the most common in Inuit women's forehead tattoos (Jenness 1970: 51; Rasmussen 1929: 312). Through personal communication, Alaskan Inuit tattoo artist Marjorie Tahbone (personal communication, October 26, 2016) told me that these forehead tattoos are related to honouring the Sun Woman, Malina, prominent figure in Inuit cosmology and, in some iterations of the story, the sister of Igaluk, the Man on the Moon.

While their story has many different regional variations, some framing Igaluk as an orphan boy and Malina a girl in his village (see, for example, Oliver 1992: 22–23), others recounting a brother and sister starting a new life through transformation (see Rasmussen 1968: 8–9) and some wherein the sister flees from unwanted incestuous advances from her brother (see Rink 1875: 236–237), all of these stories follow a male-female pair who transform into the Sun and the Moon and cycle around each other in perpetuity as a celestial complementary pair.

Although the significance of certain tattoos varies throughout the Arctic (Carillo 2014: 22), the suggestion that the V-motif is related to this story is compelling, as it is a story that exists in many forms throughout the Arctic, and additionally has interesting gendered themes running through it. It seems to hint at a conceptual balance between masculinity and femininity, drawing associations between the Igaluk (moon/night) and masculinity on one hand, and Malina (sun/day) and femininity on the other. The Sun and Moon are intrinsically related, both as siblings, and as parts of the Inuit world, comprising daytime and night-time, respectively. Notably, there is a fluid aspect to this myth; night and day are not discreetly separated, but are in a constant cycle, one that is fluid and shifting.

This demonstrates that there is a complex coding of gender into some precontact artifacts that merits investigation. In order for archaeologists to

understand this coding, we have to incorporate Inuit folklore, beliefs tied to hunting, and human-animal relations, and an examination of symbolism that has lived on in art and tattoos into our studies of material culture. The amalgamation of gendered function and features is compelling, and it says something about the way genders can merge through material culture, and how genders are not always discreetly separated but are woven together to form complex narratives about the interrelationships between people, spirits, and activities. This is in keeping with the idea that Inuit social roles were seen as fluid complimentary parts of the same system (Crass 1998, 2000). Not only were men and women seen as equal contributors, but their tasks were mutually constituted, mutually dependent, and fluid. In artifacts that exhibit multiple forms of gendered function and/or symbolism, we can see the merging of roles, the importance of femininity to masculinity (and vice versa), as well as the mediatory spaces between them.

As with human figurines, if we categorize artifacts such as these based on our own values, we miss complex narratives of how these objects might have functioned in the past. In the case of the polar bear effigy, if we simply see this object as a drag handle, we can slot it into a masculine functional category and map it onto a masculine space, or attribute a masculine/male-bodied identity to its user. On the other hand, if we classify it as a polar bear effigy, we might write it off as decorative and back away from it lest we accidentally say too much about ideology. However, if we view this object holistically, with attention to functionality, materiality, decoration, cosmology, mythical references, we can begin to tease out complex relationships between genders, as well as the interdependence and fluidity between them.

There are many animal figurines across all three collections, including multiple other polar bears. Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide a detailed analysis of each of these artifacts, they might represent starting points for this type of investigation.

Tapshi and pendants

Both drilled fox teeth and drilled polar bear teeth, primarily canines show up in abundance in all three of the archaeological collections I examined. In addition, there were several polar bear canines that were grooved for suspension rather than drilled. Based on the ethnological collection I studied, the polar bear canines were plausibly part of *tapshi*, or *angakkuit's* belts. Fox teeth were probably similarly used as pendants or amulets, which connected their wearers to the animal and spirit worlds.

In addition to polar bears, foxes seem to be categorically ambivalent. They scavenge carcasses left along the shore and on the sea ice by polar bears, occupying marginal territory between land and sea (Trott 2006: 93). In addition, foxes are conceptually related to bears. In the afterlife, people, objects, and animals could change sizes as they pleased (Trott 2006: 93; Saladin d'Anglure 1992). Bears, foxes, and lemmings were sometimes considered to be homologous

animals occupying different size-based categories (Saladin d'Anglure 1992). Additionally, in most creation myths, both foxes and polar bears were created in the very beginning, along with the world and humans, while sea mammals and caribou were created later, under different circumstances (Trott 2006: 93). Here we see agents of mediation being incorporated into the embodiment practices associated with mediation and shamanic practice.

Amulets and amulet belts are ethnographically widespread and are often seen archaeologically. There were various amulets present in all three collections examined for this thesis. Amulets can include miniature tools and artifacts, animal bones, teeth, and bits of hide (Taylor 1974: 163), human hair, and a variety of other objects that have magical or powerful properties. *Angakuqs*' belts, or *tapshi*, were worn outside of coats and had a variety of charms or amulets attached to provide the wearer protection or give them luck and skill in hunting (Birkett-Smith 1929: 206). *Tapshi* often included miniature implements drilled for suspension as well as pieces of animal bone or hide. These amulets held different meanings for different regions and different individuals, so they are not always readable in terms of their exact function, but can be interpreted as communicating magical function.

Tapshi might then be considered to be objects that straddle lines between genders. They are directly implicated in the act of mediation, and they are heavily associated with the unboundedness of shamanic activity. Polar bear canine *tapshi* have added mediatory value, since they are associated with animals that are themselves symbols of mediation. If we were to try to identify proxies for gender in the Inuit archaeological record, *tapshi* might be among the best candidates we have for physical manifestations of nonbinary gender. However, as with artifacts that archaeologists have used as proxies for men and women, *tapshi* should not be understood as direct representations of gender fluid people. Instead, they encapsulate and contribute to an *ideology* of gender fluidity, representing the ontology of mediation, rather than gendered persons directly. They are both a reflection of the *angakuq*'s identity and actors within the ceremony, demonstrating that even the best candidates for gendered "proxies" have complex agencies and meanings, and cannot be viewed as static enough to simply map onto sites.

The frequent use of polar bear teeth in *tapshi* as a facilitator for mediation might also relate to the idea in folklore that Sedna's father could travel to the spirit realm at the bottom of the sea to visit her by wrapping himself in polar bear skin (Trott 2006: 93). This story demonstrates the mediatory power not just of polar bears, but also of polar bear products. When incorporated into the ceremonial dress of the *angakuq*, canines might help facilitate acts of mediation and movement between different realms and, perhaps, between genders.

Conclusion

By moving past the concept that there is a direct homological relationship between gendered people and functional artifacts, we can begin to see gender

written into artifacts as complex and varied. By examining different artifact types and viewing them as having multifarious meanings, agencies, and interactions with gender ideology, I have demonstrated the need to analyse artifacts more holistically. I advocate a more comprehensive examination of artifacts beyond categorization into functional categories, considering their varied contextual meanings, their links to cosmology and storytelling, their oft-mixed functionalities, and their agency within gendered learning and performance. This work is meaningless if it relies on stereotyped notions of gender.

When we approach the work of artifact analysis with the assumption that artifacts will speak for themselves, we are actually making a decision that we will speak for the artifact. This was apparent in the example of figurines that were assigned gender in museum catalogues when gender may or may not have been an important layer of meaning in the object itself. The assumption that a binary gender category was the single most important thing about these figurines is one that requires a conceptual leap; this conceptual leap jeopardizes our understandings of the past and means that what we are producing are ethnographies of ourselves. The work we produce when we enter the process of archaeological investigation with these assumptions is not unlike work produced by the early ethnographers who first missed evidence of gender diversity simply because they were unaccustomed to it. In continuing along this trajectory, we limit ourselves. Beyond limiting ourselves, we are further limiting expressions of diversity and undermining the value of those things that fall outside of our own norms. If we approach this work with the willingness to sit with messiness, and if we do the painstaking work of examining our own limiting assumptions and picking them apart, perhaps we will find ourselves somewhere new.

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9 Moving forward with mess

What, then, do we make of this? Over the course of this book, I have presented the case that moving towards, rather than away from, the research that feels messy. Concurrently, this work has posed more questions and raised more problems than it seems to have solved. One such problem is that we cannot use artifacts as proxies for people when trying to make sense of the archaeological record. Another is that the tools we have for understanding the past (i.e. written history, oral history, and archaeology) are all deeply flawed and necessarily interpreted through the lens of the person who seeks to understand it. There's also the issue that the people who have the easiest access to these tools (and those who most often wind up getting paid to use them and spread their meaning) are the people least equipped to see outside of narratives that are colonial, patriarchal, cis- and heteronormative, homophobic, transphobic, xenophobic, and white supremacist. I have not presented a solution to any of these issues.

The research presented in these pages took two distinct approaches. The first was to attempt to dismantle simplistic settler narratives by listening to the thoughts and stories of stakeholders, the results of which demonstrated the inadequacy of approaches that ignore gender and sexual diversity. Of course, this is not said without some degree of irony. I am, after all, a white academic. This book is presented through a white academic lens. I am acutely aware that this work would have been more effectively and appropriately carried out by Inuit. That all, said, I have justified this work to myself by hoping that it will find its way into the hands of people who can find value and utility in what I have compiled while also remaining critical of the subjectivities and blunders attributable to its author.

The second approach—more familiar ground in the realm of archaeology—was to begin the work of re-examining artifact assemblages through a lens that allows for gender and sexual diversity. Here the archaeologists might get upset. As much as we have beat the dead horse of processual versus post-processual archaeology, we still love to distil the discipline down to this black and white binary. On one hand, we have processual archaeology, which is science-based and supposedly concrete, provable, and free of subjective thought. Although it began with the idea that anything should be

explorable using scientific methods, this tends to be a space where things like gender, identity, and sexuality do not exist. On the other hand, there is post-processual archaeology, which is sometimes seen as relying on feeling more than fact. The latter was developed, in large part, as a way to look at our subjectivities and to be critical of them. In this sense, post-processual approaches might also be viewed as attempts to create more honesty and integrity in our work. Post-processualism also runs the risk of becoming flimsy when it is over-theorized and not applied to the world with a solid foundation. It might be obvious to readers by now that I fall more within the post-processual camp. After all, I am tackling gender and sexual diversity, a topic that strikes people immediately as immaterial and niche. And perhaps it is. As I pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, I have provided more questions than answers. I have not developed a scientific methodology, nor a model for examining these topics. Instead, I have pointed to the messiness and asked that everyone look at it with me. For many archaeologists, that sounds agonizing. It sounds pointless.

But here is the rub: just because we do not engage with mess does not mean that mess does not exist. It is there. What is more is that it is visible. It is visible to everyone whose identities are not taken seriously by cisheteronormative white-supremacist archaeologies. When we ignore the mess we remove so many facets of the whole story. An example of this is the assumption that placing human bodies into two opposing categories and projecting gender onto them as a function of "nature" is the more objective route to understanding social organization. This creates an issue where we can project gender onto objects that do not, in reality, reflect gender in any obvious way. The mess is uncomfortable, but without mess, we cannot do our jobs of exploring the past.

While the two approaches taken in this book—oral history interviews and artifact-based analysis—could be presented separately, I believe that they are stronger when put into dialogue with one another. In fact, the objectives of these approaches—to understand how constructing more diverse historical narratives affects lived experience, and how the contemporary western gaze of the researcher can limit diversity in our narratives—might be viewed as two sides of the same coin, representing the mutual constitution of the past and present. It is in this sense, too, that mess emerges. Archaeologists like time periods. We like to see the past as separate from ourselves. What is separate is seen as being safely observable. Unfortunately, we do not have the luxury of such sterile boundaries. Like it or not, archaeologists are both historical and political actors. We have lenses, even if we accept Binford as our lord and saviour.

As Gazin-Schwartz and Holtorf (1999: 2) argue, the past is invariably constructed through contemporary lenses. While this statement may seem bleak—the idea that we cannot fully understand the past as people in the past understood it, and that the current state of politics, social life, popular culture, and discourse render the past a fluid and elusive beast—we must

learn to embrace this relationship rather than denying it. Our positionality as (currently living) subjects of history means that we consistently have to renegotiate our narratives of the past and, in doing so, explore it from new perspectives.

If we choose to abandon the belief that the past is separate from the present and instead embrace the continuity between past, present, and future, we can see clearly that subjects of the present are also entangled with cultural pasts. Their views of the present inform narratives of the past, and their ways of naming and identifying are entrenched in the actions and experiences of their ancestors. In conducting research that attempts to stir up fresh narratives—fresh within the scope of archaeology, that is—we must recognize that past and present are inextricably bound. In acknowledging perspectives that have gone largely unexplored in archaeological research, we contribute new angles from which we can view history, building complexity and diversity to our constructions of the past.

We have reached a point in archaeology when the perspectives of archaeologists alone are not adequate in addressing the complexity of the past, nor the relationships between descendant communities and their ancestors. It is imperative that we work for stakeholders in order to critically assess the kinds of research we do and try to lend our research to answering questions that are important to them.

In this case, LGBTQ2S+ Inuit were the primary stakeholders in a queer past, and their voices were central to this work. Oral testimony provided by participants of the interviews conducted for the purpose of this thesis attests to a desire for deepened connection between descendant communities and their ancestors. In particular, interviews demonstrated the need for LGBTQ2S+ identifying descendants to form connections with their queer heritage. Feelings of acceptance and community can likely be facilitated by teasing out analogues in the past. This first aspect of my thesis emphasized the importance of the past in the formation of the present and, in doing so, justified the need to move beyond our dominantly binary mode of gender research in Inuit contexts. Archaeologists can facilitate this process by focusing on understanding diversity in the past.

While the former aspect of this research demonstrated a need for queerness in our historical narratives, the latter aspect, wherein I began to explore gendered understandings of archaeological collections, demonstrated the possibility. By beginning the work of reassessing these collections, I hope to have given archaeologists an inroad into research of this nature. In doing so, it has been my goal to contribute to a material relationship between LGBTQ2S+ Inuit communities and their past.

Final conclusion

Inuit gender is complex and varied. Archaeologists have tended to ignore the inherent messiness in reconstructing the Inuit gender system, instead

opting for approaches that have relied on the presence of specific diagnostic tools based on their function alone. While a complementarity of gender roles is important and well documented in Inuit culture, these models limit the complexity that is also evident. Inuit were adaptable, tools were shared between people and between genders, and, in many cases, people swapped gender roles or occupied fluid and varied gender roles. Furthermore, I have demonstrated that artifacts in precontact Inuit contexts have complex meanings and were embedded in multiple aspects of Inuit life and gender construction.

While Bernard Saladin D'Anglure has attested to the presence of a "third gender" or a nonbinary gender in Inuit culture that represents a "third element", this addition only serves to expand the gender system to include another tier rather than facing the complicated nature of identity in the Inuit past. What some see as a third element in a binary system should be understood, instead, as evidence that we do not have an accurate vision of what those gender systems comprised in their entirety. We must move away from interpretations that position nonbinary gender as a *third* element or an anomaly and instead embrace the critical and challenging work that will be necessary to construct understandings of complex gender systems that do no assume binary gender as a precondition for nonbinary gender. If we are to continue with the process of queering identity in the archaeological record, especially in dealing with pasts that have been influenced by colonialism, we must de-structure our understandings, then engage in the process of restructuring according to Inuit ontologies. Restructuring must be a collaborative effort; we must work closely with descendant communities, critically examine mythology and folklore, and become more comfortable with the knowledge that we do not, in fact, know everything.

One of the primary objectives of this work has been to highlight a broader issue in archaeology, and in the social sciences generally: the problem of incessant categorization without adequate regard for the cultural or ontological accuracy of those categories. Getting these categories wrong is detrimental to our research, obscuring the ways people lived, thought, and acted in the past. However, the effect can be far more damaging than that. By erasing mess from the past, and slotting people and the things they used into simplified normative categories, we risk simplifying narratives of the past and, in turn, simplifying the concepts settler society holds regarding Indigenous descendant communities. In this way, by oversimplifying for the sake of neatness, we contribute to a hegemonic power structure. In doing research that is colonial at its roots, we are furthering structural violence against Indigenous communities. There is no way around that unless we slow down, or stop completely, to reassess what we are doing, where our narratives come from, and whether they are rooted in fact or colonial constructs. In the pages of this thesis, I advocated that archaeologists, therefore, make a mess of our research. In discussing body theory, Boric and Robb (2008: 1) point out that

> what [archaeology] needs now is something more broad, varied, and synthetic, to provoke the imagination and map out new territories; something bringing together the diverse strands of an emerging perspective to provide a guide to the range of possibilities, both in terms of theoretical approach and methods.

While the authors are talking about body theory in archaeology, their point transcends this limited scope. It could be argued that this is the shape all emergent archaeological approaches take. We begin to imagine something that we lack as scholars, and slowly hash out the broad parameters of what it would mean to address that lack. As we accumulate information, as we try and fail or try and succeed to tackle these issues, we gain more nuanced understandings of what approaches work and which do not. But in the beginning, this work must be provocative, encouraging a variety of scholars to help dismantle what was there before so that we can rebuild something that is more to our satisfaction. Such is the process taking shape in the realm of queer archaeology. This thesis engages in that project, whose aim is to dismantle understandings of gender and sexuality that we have come to understand do not hold across time and space and then to rebuild. The task of dismantling is not the work of someone who requires everything to be tidy.

Through the use of multiple lines of evidence and a multi-vocal approach that incorporates Inuit knowledge and opinions from a variety of perspectives, I maintain that complex understandings of gender can be accessible to archaeologists. In order to achieve this, archaeologists must work to gain a deeper understanding of gender in its own cultural context rather than projecting our own constructs of gender onto the material record. In doing so, I believe we can expand the definition of community archaeology by inviting people with a broad range of gender expressions, sexualities, and identities into the past. While I did not find materials that can, in a clear-cut or uncomplicated way, be taken to indicate that there were nonbinary individuals at a given site, speaking with people and engaging with literature that sheds light on gender variation in the Inuit past demonstrated that slotting materials into gendered categories is a flawed approach, regardless of what the genders you hope to "see" are. It is my contention that archaeologists must make a more sincere effort to understand fluidity and open up spaces in our narratives for people who did not fit neatly into binary categories. By viewing the past in this way, we begin to chip away at notions that the identities of LGBTQ2S+ Inuit living today are unrepresented in the past. If archaeology has the potential to uncover subaltern pasts, it is the responsibility of archaeologists to utilize these powerful discursive tools to subvert and question hegemonic biopolitical structures that have erased queer experiences and identities through historical narratives.

I have demonstrated that, moving forward, archaeological research that takes a range of gender identities and sexual orientations into account will be beneficial to Inuit communities. This can provide LGBTQ2S+ Inuit new

opportunities to negotiate their identities in light of rich cultural pasts. If archaeologists can learn to slow down and spend more time understanding artifacts holistically, we can not only greatly improve our understandings of the past, but we can begin to tease out complexity. This complexity, which is frequently greatly lacking in archaeological research, moves us away from oversimplifications of the people, complex and varied, whose narratives we seek to rediscover.

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